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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# SIX CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

by

MARIE CECILE INNES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND

RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of children's responses to literature in the context of one classroom. Six grade five and six children who were independent readers were identified as key informants. In order to obtain a description of the phenomenon of children's responses, a qualitative approach was used.

Extensive fieldnotes, interviews, transcripts of responses and conversations, written responses, and other artifacts were collected over an 11 week period. The first level of analysis provided a description of the classroom context, the home context from the perspective of the parents, and the lived experiences of each of the six children in the context of the classroom. Based on Fish's (1980) notion of interpretive communities it was inferred that these children were members of various interpretive communities in their homes and in the classroom.

Trends in the kinds of responses children made in the context of the classroom were identified in the second level of analysis. Further analysis of these trends revealed interpretive communities that provided different perspectives from which each child constructed meaning and made responses. The children's interpretations of explicit and implicit messages within these communities and the perspective from which they responded to literature seemed to be influenced by those who had most authority over the knowledge to be used.

When the children's interpretations of social interactions gave legitimacy to the teacher as authority over the kind of knowledge to be used in responses,

their responses answered teacher's questions, reflected teacher's views, reflected teacher's vocabulary, and seemed to be mainly cursory expressions of feelings, likes and dislikes, and issues surrounding characters and events.

When the children gave legitimacy to their own knowledge and experiences, their responses reflected their use of personal knowledge in their discussions of their own encounters similar to characters and events, their intrigue with the stories, and their opinions about issues, events, and characters' motives. Children's responses to literature were shaped by their perceptions of whose authority directed the kind of knowledge they used in their responses. This study has shown the need to include social influences in the context of the classroom as a critical variable in theories of reader response.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

### Introduction

In Western society, the amount and diversity of literature available for children is overwhelming, and they are given extensive personal choice about the books they read. Children are also aware that certain books are more appealing to them than others, and their responses to literature reveal not only their interpretation of the text, but something about themselves and the influences on their construction of meaning.

Various views have been expressed over the last century on what the relationship is between reader, text, and interpretation. Theories have ranged between objective or text centred views (Leavis, 1932; Richards, 1929) to subjective symbolization of self views (Bleich, 1978; Holland, 1975). Others (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978), whose theories fall midway along the continuum between objective and subjective, see the process of generating meaning as an interaction involving the text and the reader's personal knowledge which has arisen out of experiences and relationships.

Rosenblatt's (1978) main focus is on what the reader is living through during the reading experience. Iser (1990) recognizes the influence of the text and holds that the text allows for multiple meanings for the reader. Fish (1980) contends that readers make use of interpretive strategies that are socially negotiated in order to 'write' their own texts. This view forms the basis of Fish's

(1980) concept of interpretive community, but he does not elaborate on what variables constitute this community. He recognizes the interpretive community as consisting of individuals who agree, prior to reading, on interpretive strategies for assigning intentions during reading. For the purpose of this study, an interpretive community consists of individuals who, through interpretation of social interaction within that community, share similar perspectives from which to respond to literature. It was hypothesized that a classroom context is the site of multiple interpretive communities, which each influence the nature of children's responses to literature.

Critical social theory highlights the influence of interaction between individuals in the classroom on shaping meaning. How messages are transmitted and the relations of equality that exist between individuals in rights to talk, to question, and to discuss are basic to achieving understandings. When the ideal speech situation of equal rights to communicate is not present, the relations of power are not balanced and the talk of one individual will reflect domination while the other reflects submission (Giddens, 1977; White, 1979). Critical social theory also draws attention to the world view that individuals hold of what school is, and how certain beliefs and practices are seen as natural and as making sense in that context (Sharp, 1980). Hence, critical social theory was viewed as a potential tool for understanding the nature of the interpretive communities within classrooms and how children's response to literature may be shaped through the beliefs, values, and ideas that structure everyday practices in that setting.

## Purpose of The Study

The major purpose of this study was to explore the nature of children's responses to literature. More specifically, it was to determine the characteristics of grade five and six children's responses to literature in the context of one classroom.

The children whose responses are the focus of this study were students within the context of one classroom, sharing this context with other students and teachers. Six children were identified as key informants on the basis of reading ability and interests after a one week initial period of observation and interviews in the classroom.

The collection of data for this study, based on the premise that children's responses are influenced by the context in which they occur, was influenced by a naturalistic paradigm. Data were collected through extensive field notes made during observation, children's written responses, audio recordings of verbal responses and interviews, and a large collection of children's work. These data were sought to provide a view of each of the six children's definitions of response, and a view of the nature of each child's responses within the context of the classroom.

A systematic and thorough post-site analysis was carried out on data collected to determine the nature of children's responses to literature and trends in influences on children's construction of meaning. Critical social theory, with a focus on examining what happens in social institutions such as schools and which highlights the influence of interaction between individuals on shaping meaning,

provided a foundation from which to explore the nature of the children's responses. The trends that developed formed understandings of influences on children's responses made in different interpretive communities.

## Limitations and Delimitations

A major limitation in this study lies in the ability of 10 to 12 year old children to verbalize their views and thoughts. It is also recognized that the interpretation of data presented in this study is only one plausible interpretation of the data.

Delimitations of the study centre mainly around methodological issues. Suppositions may be made from the results of the study, but generalizations cannot be made about the nature of children's responses to literature for several reasons. First, the data were collected from a small sample of six grade five and six children from one classroom. Second, the classroom setting, based on a philosophy of team teaching, multiaging, subject integration, varied strategies for grouping children, and project approach was atypical and clearly not representative of the norm.

## Significance of the Study

Qualitative research, allowing for naturalistic descriptions of life worlds through extensive observations and data collection, may aid in capturing the complexity of the phenomenon of children's responses to literature in the context of one classroom. It may clarify how children's social construction of this setting arises through their interpretations of the explicit and implicit nature of social

interactions within the classroom. It may also reflect how authority and social relations in the classroom mediate children's experiences and shape the nature of their responses to literature.

There is nothing in the literature to suggest that the nature of 10 to 12 year olds' responses to literature are the products of various interpretive communities within the classroom. Theories about reader response (Fish, 1980, Iser, 1990, and Rosenblatt, 1978) describe response as an active negotiation between the text and reader, which can be affected by expectations placed from outside the reader on the reader's role in this process. Critical social theory may provide the basis for a more complete and complex understanding of the context in which the response occurs in terms of how concepts of knowledge and power may shape the interpretation of that context and, in turn, influence the nature of the response made within it.

Research which reveals a clear picture of both uniqueness and commonalities of children's responses within various interpretive communities will enhance our understanding of influences on children's meaning making. This may lead to educators being more sensitive to social influences on children's responses to literature and, in turn, to allow them to respond in their unique ways.

Teachers often expend a considerable amount of time and effort in teaching children how to respond to literature. By providing direction for how they can analyse what children do in different contexts within the classroom, insights may emancipate their own teaching and encourage reflective criticism about the construction of knowledge. In turn, the child may be freed to more reflective

self-directed learning.

## Organization of the Dissertation

The purpose of this study, to explore the nature of children's responses to literature in the context of one classroom, involved six 10 to 12 year old children from the same classroom. While a brief overview of the study has been provided in Chapter I, the background and theoretical framework for the study will be presented in Chapter II. Theories of reader response, views about reader response in the classroom setting, and recent research on contextual influences on reader response will also be presented. As well, concepts of knowledge and authority, from the viewpoint of critical social theory will be introduced. Chapter III will provide a discussion of the methodology and design of the study, including a detailed account of the analysis process used. Chapter IV will describe the context in which the study took place and provide views of the six children in their lived experiences of the classroom context and as readers from the perspective of parents. The nature of the children's responses as viewed from the different perspectives from which each child responded in the classroom will be presented in Chapter V. Finally, Chapter VI will consist of the summary, conclusions and discussions, implications for theory, practice, and further research, and final comments.

# CHAPTER II

# BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

## Introduction

This chapter will review the literature relevant to the exploration of the nature of children's response to literature. As hypothesized in Chapter I, children's responses to literature may be a product of their experiences in various interpretive communities within the context of the classroom.

This study brings together reader response theories, which provide various theoretical orientations to describe reader responses to literature, and critical social theory which provides concepts to describe the relationship between knowledge and authority, and how this relationship shapes the classroom context. For organizational purposes, these ideas will be discussed under three headings: theories of reader response, reader response in the classroom context, and knowledge and authority in classrooms.

## Theories of Reader Response

### The Continuum of Response Theories

New criticism theories of response to literature, characterized as text centred, assume the existence of an ideal reader who takes an objective stance toward text. If placed along a continuum from objective to subjective, at the objective end of the continuum would be Richards (1929), who focuses on analysis of textual detail, and Leavis (1932), who is concerned with creating an

elite society by defining appropriate text and specifying ways in which they should be read.

Though Culler (1975) concedes to a range of possible meanings in text, his view comes from a more objective structuralist perspective. He believes readers must be equipped with both linguistic competence and a knowledge of conventions in literature in order to understand the process by which the content is developed. According to Culler, for readers "who have mastered the system, a range of acceptable meanings is possible" (p. 120). Although this approach stresses instruction and guided learning, Culler's concern implies teacher instruction for helping children learn skills and content.

At the other extreme in reader response theory along this continuum are the reader centred or subjective views. These include theories such as those of Bleich (1978), who focuses on the reader's feelings and emotions when interpreting text, and Holland (1975), who focuses on the reader's identity of self in text. Also along this continuum, Fish (1980), Iser (1978), Purves (1985), and Rosenblatt (1978) all share the belief that the creation of meaning from literature is a complex process involving both reader and text in creating many possible meanings. Post structuralist theorists view the creation of meaning as a much more dynamic reader-text transaction than the structuralist notion of examining the literary structure to determine possible meaning and then examining how the meaning was determined.

Theories of reader response ranging between objective and subjective seem to share a concern about the relationship between readers and text and whether meaning arises from the reader or from the text. The argument of whether the

meaning is in the reader or the text has reached a middle ground in the transactionalists' view that meaning does not reside solely in either the reader or the text, but in the interaction between them.

## The Transactionalist View

The intention of the Dartmouth Conference in 1966 was to pay more attention to the learner's literary experience (Dixon, 1967; Squire, 1968), and to shift the purpose of reading from information transfer to the reader's construction of meaning from text (Bogdan and Straw, 1990; Goodman, 1985; Harste, Woodward, and Burke, 1984, Probst, 1990). Phillips and Walker (1987) give recognition to the reader as being active in making meaning from text rather than as a passive recipient of knowledge. Also, the move from focus on a text centred view of reading (Leavis, 1932; Richards, 1929; Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1954) to a greater, though not exclusive, recognition of the reader's role has given more emphasis to the idea that the construction of meaning arises out of an interactive process involving the text and the reader's personal knowledge. Recognition is also given to personal knowledge having arisen out of experiences and relationships (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978). This study leans heavily on transactionalist reader response theories, contending that the reader's response occurs in the transaction between the reader and the text within a social context (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978).

## Reader and Text

Rosenblatt (1978), who introduced the transactionalist view, was one of the first to discuss the idea of reader as crucial in construction of meaning from the

text. This view is contrary to Richards' (1929) proposal that the reader is a hindrance to the precise meaning carried in the text. Readers, actively involved with rather than passively receiving the text, bring unique backgrounds, experiences, interests, values, and beliefs to their interaction with the text in the creation of meaning.

Rosenblatt (1982), who values individual reflection and analysis of text, expresses concern that teacher domination may place too much emphasis on teacher-approved interpretations of text and may not produce readers who establish relations between themselves and the text. This concern is also expressed by others (Egan, 1988; Eisner, 1985; Meek, 1988) who urge educators to encourage in children deeper personal understandings about what they read, of themselves, of their world, and of their own interaction with the text, rather than focus on particular ideas or referents to be retained from the text. Phillips and Walker (1987) state, "Children should be encouraged and allowed to learn to read by reading for purposes that are personally meaningful purposes" (p.144).

Rosenblatt (1978) defines the literary experience as a "synthesis of what the reader already knows and feels and desires with what the literary text offers" (p. 272). The 'poem', a term Rosenblatt uses to describe the transaction between the reader and text, involves the reader's past experiences, present state, present interests, and preoccupations.

A major factor for Rosenblatt (1978), in her view of influences on the creation of meaning, lies in the differentiation she makes between efferent reading when "attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue after reading" (p. 23) and aesthetic reading when "the reader's primary concern

is with what happens during the actual reading event" (p. 24). Rosenblatt (1980) maintains that questions, free talk, or comments about the story which enable children to recall pleasure, surprise, or make connections to their own experiences or other personal interpretations "may be more productive than the dutiful rehashing of the whole poem or story" (p. 393). Beach (1990) offers support, stating that readers constantly shift "their stances or orientations, depending on the social relation with the text" (p. 72) and contends that "the ambience of the social context is essential" (p. 74).

Iser (1978, 1990), who recognizes the roles of both reader and text in the creation of meaning, views the text as a guide to the reader through the way it generates and modifies expectations in its' style of presentation of content. Along with others (Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1980), he recognizes the reader's background knowledge and prior experiences as important in making meaning, particularly when filling in gaps or areas of indeterminacy left by what is not said in the text by the author.

Areas of indeterminacy in the text invite readers to participate and according to Iser (1990), "Texts with minimal indeterminacy tend to be tedious for it is only when the reader is given the chance to participate actively that he will regard the text, whose intention he himself has helped to compose, as real" (p. 10). Iser (1978) emphasizes reader's roles as participants when during their involvement with text, they put into action what they know through lived experiences. He says that even though we as readers may lose awareness of our prior experiences while we read, we are still guided by them unconsciously, "and by the end of our reading we are liable to want to incorporate the new

experience into our store of knowledge" (p. 37).

According to Iser (1990), when questions or comments come from other than the reader with intentions for guiding the reading, then the reader's opportunity to travel through the text and share a game of imagination with it is sabotaged, and "this is no longer a matter of filling a gap by making a judgement, here the reader is forced to reverse completely a false judgement" (p. 14). Iser's (1978, 1990) belief that readers develop an understanding about their own reading process when they explore texts creatively also supports the view by others (Cooper, 1985; Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978; Thomson, 1987) that this kind of knowledge becomes personal power for readers to direct their own reading rather than to be directed by others.

Fish (1980) also agrees that meaning making occurs in the interaction between the reader and text, and uses the term interpretive strategies to describe what the reader does to "shape" the text. Fish (1980) views these interpretive strategies as dispositions which are, in his words, ". . . to find, by looking for, . . . to confer significances, . . . to mark out formal units" (p. 168). He contends that these interpretive strategies, which exist prior to the actual reading, are put into action within interpretive communities and in this way constitute the reading. In this view, neither the text nor the reader are perceived as sole producers of meaning, and the way readers perceive the text is guided by their interpretive strategies.

Fish (1980) is unclear about where the interpretive strategies come from, but contends that members of the same interpretive communities have stability through interpretive strategies that they share in the community and use in the

interpretation of text. He believes that during the negotiation of meaning, understandings between individuals do not occur only because a language is shared, but because the individuals share a world of "already in place objects, purposes, goals, procedures, values; and it is to the features of that world that any words" (p. 304) spoken between members are understood.

## Reader Response in the Classroom Context

### Reader Responses

Theories of reader response have led to the development of various systems for categorizing the kinds of responses children make to literature. The most influential of these systems has been that worked out by Purves and Rippere (1968). Others (Probst, 1988; Purves and Beach, 1972; and Weinberger, 1972) have simplified Purves and Rippere's (1968) system.

According to Probst (1988), Purves and Beach (1972), and Weinberger (1972), responses to literature may be personal, descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative. Since the meaning created by a reader is unique to that individual, they agree that variation among individuals in the kinds of responses they make may be wide. Purves and Beach's (1972) view that "readers are more interested in the content of the literature than in its form" (p. 35) is consistent with the transactionalist view that response or the creation of meaning is neither in the text or the reader, but in a transaction between the two (Rosenblatt, 1978). Harding (1968), in his report to the Dartmouth conference, agrees that formulation of response must begin by encouraging children to verify characters and events in text through their own personal experiences. He contended that "a

demand for more analysis, judgement, and interpretation will inhibit proper affective response" (p. 24).

Protherough (1986), drawing on structuralist critics such as Culler (1975), criticizes these categories, contending that readers' qualitative judgements of stories are absent from this system. He believes reader's qualitative judgements of stories may be made at three hierarchical levels. They may make generalized assertions that they like a story, may express awareness of their own relationship with a book, or may attempt critical judgement by providing objective justification for story quality.

Probst (1988), Purves and Beach (1972), and Weinberger (1972) do not view their categories as hierarchical, and agree with Rosenblatt (1980) that we should not "hurry the student away from personal aesthetic experience, in order to satisfy efferent purposes of categorizing the genre, paraphrasing the objective meaning, or analysing the techniques represented by the text" (p. 391-392). Rosenblatt (1985) suggests that a response is a "unique coming together of a particular personality and a particular text at a particular time and place under particular circumstances" (p. 104), and Beach (1990) and Probst (1988) in concordance with this view believe responses are not solitary activities as they involve the reader's experiences with people and things. Fish (1980) and Iser (1990) also contend that reader response is influenced by factors within the context in which the response occurs.

## Contextual Influences on Responses

The Reader and the Text. Response to literature arises out of the

influences of reader and text upon each other, and the ways in which children respond are influenced by the context in which they respond (Fish, 1980). These influences arise from the extent to which children can make use of their own knowledge and prior experiences as they make sense of text (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978).

Fish (1980) differs from Culler's (1975) more objective view that competence in the grammar of literature is necessary for readers to have prior to reading and that these skills are not redefined during the reading. Fish (1980) argues against text oriented views of people such as Hirsch (1988) who see the teacher as central in instilling knowledge about literature that children memorize. He believes strongly that the reader is a social construct "whose operations are delimited by the systems of intelligibility that inform it" (p. 335), and that meanings readers confer on texts have their source in the interpretive community. In other words, readers in a group share strategies that arise prior to reading and guide their understanding when they read, but these semantic competencies are continually redefined or challenged by individuals within the interpretive community during the reading.

The Teaching Approach. The theoretical orientation of teachers toward the meaning of literacy may influence their approach to teaching literature. The teaching approach may, in turn, influence the kinds of responses children make to literature. Harper (1990) has described how different views about literacy may reflect the belief that knowledge learned in the classroom should be generalizable to the broader society, but the approaches to teaching may vary. She refers to Hirsch (1988), Rosenblatt (1978), and Giroux (1981), explaining

that differences among them may lie in whose knowledge is valued in the classroom and how the knowledge is seen to be used outside the classroom.

She refers first to Hirsch (1988), a structuralist, who values being culturally literate, and suggests the direct teaching of specific information and skills. He believes skills and factual information would provide a standard for discourse in society. The second view referred to by Harper is that of Rosenblatt (1978), a transactionalist, who believes that knowledge about literacy comes through teachers guiding children into experiencing texts through reflection and analysis. This not only develops sensitivity to text but a social sensitivity that can be generalized to the broader context outside school. The third view is that of Giroux (1981), a critical theorist, who views the teacher as a co-investigator with children as they are involved with text. He believes through questioning and solving problems, children will learn to read the world critically and politically. Each of these views implies a perspective of the context of a classroom, how teaching would look in that context, and the influence the context would have on the child's response to literature.

Reid's (1984) differentiation between two approaches exemplifies how responses to literature may be influenced by each approach. The first, the gallery approach, in which little recognition is given to the reader as generating meaning when reading, is consistent with Hirsch's (1988) view and occurs when text meaning comes from someone outside the reader who has expertise the reader must imitate. The other, the workshop approach, allows readers to generate their own meanings from the text. Reid (1984) maintains that in this approach the "reader interrogates the literary text, even interferes with it,

looking for its gaps, considering how those gaps might be filled" (p. 25). The workshop approach, in agreement with Rosenblatt's (1978) value in readers having opportunities to analyse and reflect on personal experiences and Beach's (1990) view that response is a social activity, encourages freedom for students to collaborate with one another as they make meaning of text.

Teacher Role in the Classroom. The classroom context in which responses are generated is shaped by the role of the teacher (Galda, 1983, 1983). Mehan (1979) draws attention to how implicit rules that are communicated by teachers in the classroom imply varied or different courses of action or directions for children to take when responding to questions or making comments in the classroom. Interpretation of implicit rules, according to Mehan (1979) "involves going beyond the information given in verbal instructions to understand the teacher, and linking particular features to general patterns by filling in contextual information" (p. 170). Mehan (1979) also sees the teacher's role in the classroom as more powerful than the children's because, in his view, the teacher has more control than children over happenings in the classroom setting. Phillips and Walker (1987) also draw attention to the possibility that definitions of reading at home may differ from the school's definition for reading. Inconsistencies that may exist between the home and school about views of reading may also influence the reader's response in each of the contexts. These different contexts of home and school in children's worlds may provide variations from which they question, negate, or affirm social values that they encounter vicariously through reading or in real life, and compare with their own.

Research on the Influence of Classroom Context on Responses

Major findings in studies on influences in the classroom context focus on how the context can be varied by the teacher giving students authority in discussions and responses. For example, when Torbe (1974) removed himself as instructor from involvement in college student discussions about a story they had listened to, he found the students seemed to explore their own thoughts more freely and honestly than when he was present in their discussions. Also, Strickland, Dillon, Funkhouser, Glick, and Rogers (1989) recorded more student talk in four different classes ranging between grades one and six when students were given the opportunity to assume the role of expert about a story. The students seemed to have greater control over, and were more involved in, interactional talk among themselves than when the teacher directed the discussion.

It appears that when children are encouraged to take risks and think independently, they may be more confident in using their unique styles in making sense of text. In one study Dias (1987) had grade nine and ten students use respond aloud protocols (RAP's) after they were interviewed in small groups about poetry. The interviews were as non-directive as possible. During the respond aloud protocols the students were involved in thinking aloud as they made sense of an unfamiliar piece of poetry. In this study, Dias found that during the thinking aloud activity, students responded freely and with confidence, were articulate, and used varied approaches for making sense of the poetry. Some of them used bottom-up approaches where they looked for clues at the sentence level, while some used top-down approaches where they looked for

more global clues. Some paraphrased, some looked for themes, and others made connections between events in their own lives and the poem. Dias (1987) contends there should be less teacher involvement in the contexts of students making sense of text; ". . . expectations and attitudes that powerfully influence reading are engendered largely in many teacher-dominated practices that prevail in the teaching of poetry" (p. 83).

In another study, it was found that when certain strategies for discussions about literature were deliberately presented, these strategies as well as others not presented were used by students in later discussions. Athanases (1988) presented grade eleven students with debatable issues such as smoking, pop music, and television programs. He led the discussions and modelled strategies for challenging and questioning views. Then he withdrew his own involvement and provided time for students to discuss literature they were reading. He found that when they discussed the literature on their own, the students talked more and used more varied strategies than those he had deliberately presented, such as referring to pieces of text as evidence and challenging one another. He contends that students in this context were more involved in their discussions in shaping their own meanings about the literature they were reading than when he was involved in leading their discussions.

Students responses to literature may also vary according to opportunities that are given for individual reflection. In a study with college students, Beach (1973) found when students were involved in individual free response prior to group discussions, their responses were more reflective than the kinds students made in groups that did not experience prior thought and reflection.

Students may also have difficulty changing the approach they have used previously in response to literature in the classroom context. For example, McHoul (1982) found that students approaches to tasks were not easily changed. In a study with grade twelve students' reading of poetry in the classroom, he gave them randomly selected lines in a poem. He found they accepted the poem as complete, though key sentences were missing. They did not question the poem or consider strategies alternate to those they always used in that class to make sense of it. Instead, they struggled by reading, re-reading, and looking for meaning in later lines.

Summary. Most of the literature and research on contextual influences on reader response has focused on high school or college students, and there continues to be a need to explore the nature of response within the various interpretive communities that exist in the classroom. This is supported by Kirk (1990) who states "the actual extent to which meaning of a text is determined by a variety of contextual factors must become a focus of interest" (p. 414). As evidenced in the studies cited, exploration of contextual influences on reader response has focused primarily on how the classroom context is shaped by the role of the teacher. It appears from the studies described that the more control students were given over their own responses, the more freely they expressed their ideas. This then draws attention to the need to explore the relationships between knowledge and authority in the classroom and students' responses to literature.

## Knowledge and Authority in Classrooms

### Introduction to Critical Social Theory

The aim of critical social theory is consistent with that of schools, which is to enable individuals to acquire the knowledge and power to be in control of their own lives (Gibson, 1986). It provides a foundation to investigate how the context of the classroom is shaped by concepts of knowledge and authority. It also helps to illuminate the effects of implicit relations of power and resistance, and perceptions of knowledge that are transmitted through individuals' relationships with others. It gives recognition to individuals moving beyond acknowledging power relations in their every day world to reflecting on their own relationships with people, things, and events in that world. By recognizing not only the power relations, but their own relationships with that world, they are enabled to experience their world in a way that is more true to themselves (Smith, 1988). Fay (1989) explains this process as "shedding illusions that are central to our very identity" (p. 12). Critical social theory provides concepts through which the influences of children's perceptions of their relationships with others can be viewed as they give shape to their interpretation of and response to literature.

### Connection Between Knowledge and Authority

From a sociological perspective, knowledge is a "result of social interaction, depending greatly upon the intentions of those involved and upon negotiation about how they define given situations" (Musgrave, 1988, p. 60). In other words, the kind of knowledge produced depends on a social process involving

changeable and varied norms and conventions, which in turn are dependent on interactions between those involved. Heshusius (1986) and McLaren (1989) refer to the process of shaping knowledge by contextual conditions and meanings and by conscious and unconscious human purposes as the social construction of knowledge.

A major concept in discussions of school knowledge in critical social theory is ideology, which refers to beliefs, values, and feelings that an individual holds that characterize a social reality. The concept of ideology is useful in explaining not only the lived experiences of children in classrooms, but how teacher's views of "knowledge, human nature, values, and society are mediated through the commonsense assumptions they use to structure classroom experiences" (Giroux, 1981, p. 299). Prior to even starting school, children begin to develop ideas about what school is from others in their social world. Once they become students, their ideologies continue to develop from messages and norms that are embedded in the social relations, practices, and experiences in the classroom (Apple, 1990; Sharp, 1980). According to Giroux (1981) these ideologies are "carried in the consciousness and embedded in the personality structures of individuals" (p. 198).

Teachers and children both bring unique backgrounds of experiences from outside school which shape their individual needs and behaviors in school. Giroux (1981) contends that pedagogical practices involve relationships between school culture and "overt and covert dimensions of the curriculum on the one hand, and the contradictory lived experiences that teachers and children bring to school on the other" (p. 297). It is in these relationships that varying degrees of

conformity and resistance develop in the classroom. For example, teachers may be seen as authority in the classroom context because they structure the children's school day, define what counts as knowledge, regulate social interaction, and reward and punish. Meyer (1977) supports this notion in his view of education as an ideology which legitimates and reinforces the concept of the teacher as the main authority in the classroom. He states, "education functions as a legitimating theory of knowledge, defining certain types of knowledge as extant and as authoritative . . . and defines categories of persons possessing these bodies and forms of authority" (p. 66).

Transfer of knowledge is only one dimension that may generate varying degrees of conformity or resistance in the classroom. Conformity and resistance may also be produced depending on the extent to which there is equality of power or authority. It appears that children's resistance to the culture of classroom instruction is most evident when their self-identity at school does not match that formed and supported outside of school (Giroux, 1988; McLaren,1989; and Musgrave, 1988). Apple (1990) indicates that as students get older their ability to reason and think through aspects of their own social and cultural conditions requires "continuous and increasingly sophisticated justification for acceptance of the distinctions and social rules they have learned earlier" (p. 83).

The education system, consisting of people, knowledge, and the connections of power between them, defines what is legitimate knowledge, and through curriculum, sets up different disciplines and ordered contents to be taught. Paulo Freire's (1972b) concept of 'banking education' describes the process of

giving certain knowledge to individuals, which if they store it, may later be turned in for rewards and credit.

Based on a view that "few workers bridge the gap between basic research on how students read texts on the one hand and studies of classroom practices on the other" (p. 24), Miall (1990) proposed a model of the structure of literary response which he states "is based neither on prescribing the content of the response nor on a particular theoretical view of literature" (p. 7). Through this model Miall (1990) discriminates between the spheres of teacher and student authority. He contends that teachers are often guided in their teaching of literacy by the authority they possess, and in turn control the authority the student is allowed to possess in responding to text. His view is that teacher authority is most in effect when literary skills or factual information are taught, and student authority most in effect when their responses are influenced by their self concepts when they reflect on personal concerns and memories. Miall (1990) presents concepts of learning skills which range between teacher authority and student authority along a continuum of literary competence, cognition, emotion, and self concept. He contends each concept has potential to influence children's responses depending on whether it is closer to teacher authority on the continuum or closer to student authority on the same continuum.

Hidden Curriculum

A hidden curriculum has been hypothesized to exist in schools (Anyon, 1983; Giroux, 1981; Jackson, 1968; Willis, 1977) which functions as a vehicle of socialization as well as an agency of social control within the classroom setting.

Anyon (1983), Giroux (1981), Jackson (1968), and Willis (1977) allege that explicit and implicit teachings that are not recognized as part of the school program make up the hidden curriculum. Whether an activity is viewed as, for example, work or play (Apple and King, 1976) or gallery or workshop (Reid, 1984) is determined to a large extent by each child's interpretation of social meanings in the classroom.

Giroux (1981) identifies common threads that run through various definitions of hidden curriculum. He views these as "unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying routines and social relationships in school and classroom life" (p. 286).

In his work on life in schools, Jackson (1968) demonstrated how organizational structures in the context of the classroom inform children in three distinct ways about the way school is. The first, living in crowds, involves each child constantly being with or working with others in the classroom. Gordon (1988) and Fine (1987, 1989) agree that though children work side by side in groups, or in a crowd of others, they don't usually interact with each other but work alone. The second, praise, involves what others think of each child's work or behaviour in the classroom. The third, power, involves each child's recognition of who has authority in terms of what knowledge and whose knowledge is most important at any given time in the classroom. Bates (1982) accepts these structural aspects, and draws attention to other influences such as time, social forms, and relationships between teachers and children on shaping children's meaning of a context, and the interpretations they make within it.

The norms, values, and dispositions that are learned about the classroom

early in a child's life build background knowledge that children use for the rest of their lives. "The school definitions internalized during one's initial school life provide constitutive rules for later life in classrooms" (Apple and King, 1976, p. 117). This basically ensures the transmission of ideologies consisting of beliefs, values, and feelings about school.

Communication

Underlying Habermas' view of understanding and interpreting human interaction according to Giddens (1977) is his belief that language is dependent on social processes, and in this way, legitimises power, but he believes power also distorts the communication. In Habermas' (1979) term, an "ideal speech community" outlines how messages are transmitted, and in order to exist, the ideal speech community depends on relations of equality between individuals in rights to talk, to question, and to discuss. When the social relations of equality are not balanced, the talk of one individual may reflect power, while the other may reflect submission.

Critical social theory helps to explain how individual beliefs, values, and feelings about school justify the teacher as having authority over knowledge in the classroom (Apple, 1990; Meyer, 1977; Sharp, 1980). It also draws attention to implicit and explicit messages that socialize and control the individuals in the classroom (Anyon, 1983; Giroux, 1981; Jackson, 1968; Willis, 1977) and helps to explain how communication between individuals may exist in which there are equal rights to talk, to question, and to discuss (Giddens, 1977; Habermas, 1979).

## Conclusion

In this study, response to literature, or the construction of meaning, is viewed as arising out of an interactive process between the text and the reader. Rosenblatt (1978), Iser (1990), and Fish (1980) postulate that reader response is shaped by the reader's prior experiences and knowledge in interaction with the text. They argue that children's lived experiences provide the source of knowledge that helps them make sense of the text as they interact with it. It is also agreed that response is not a solitary activity (Probst, 1988; Purves and Beach, 1972; Rosenblatt, 1985; Weinberger, 1972) and that children must not be hurried into critical analysis of the text.

Children share experiences with others and learn from interactions with them in various cultural contexts in their world. Expectations that arise out of children's interpersonal relations with others and their ideologies of their roles as individuals in the classroom seem to influence their interpretation of text. Implicit and explicit rules in the classroom (Mehan, 1979), approaches to teaching that reflect whose knowledge is valued (Harper, 1990), and cultural values (Phillips and Walker, 1987) are believed to influence the nature of responses to literature. Various studies also show evidence of influences on response when the classroom context is altered by teachers giving students greater control over how and when they use their own personal knowledge. Beliefs, values, and feelings about what school is and what happens there often justifies authority over knowledge (Apple, 1990; Meyer, 1977; Sharp, 1980), and a hidden curriculum of implicit and explicit messages (Anyon, 1983; Giroux,

1981; Jackson, 1968; Willis, 1977) influences the extent to which communication exists between individuals in which there are equal rights to talk, to question, and to discuss (Giddens, 1977; Habermas, 1979).

Since the context in which children live at any given time is socially constructed through interpretations they make about their experiences and social interactions that occur within it, the possibility for them to be members of various unique socially constructed interpretive communities within the context of the classroom is high. Each interpretive community may have potential then, for influencing the kind of response made within it, depending on who has authority over the kind of knowledge produced (Musgrave, 1988) within it. The perceived role of that authority, the nature of communication between individuals, and implicit and explicit messages about expectations within the community may have potential for influencing the children's responses to literature.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

## Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of children's responses to literature in the context of one classroom. Children's written responses and transcripts of their verbal responses, transcripts of the researcher's interviews with them, written recordings of their verbatim comments, and transcripts of discussions between children were collected. These together with extensive observation notes taken as the children interacted with others and were involved in their regular classroom activities during each full school day provided the major sources of information for this study. The purpose of this study, and the need to collect as much information as possible about the context in which it took place and the lived experiences of those within, dictated a qualitative approach.

This chapter will provide a description of the methodology used. This will be followed by a description of the procedures for selection of the classroom, access to the classroom and selection of key informants, data collection, and data analysis.

## The Qualitative Methodology

The qualitative approach used in this study was chosen to make it possible to obtain a description of the phenomenon of children's responses to literature

in the context of one classroom that was to be investigated. Data collected about what was seen and heard was then analyzed to make sense of and to provide insights into the nature of responses in the contexts in which they were made. Erickson (1986) gives support to a descriptive-interpretive approach in his recognition that individuals are able to construct a social reality, rather than the reality invariably determining their perceptions. Gage (1989) agrees, stating "The effects on people's actions of their interpretations of their world create the possibility that people may differ in their responses to the same or similar situations" (p.5). In a qualitative orientation, researchers attempt to understand the experiential lifeworld of individuals in the context in which the events and interactions occur (Van Manen, 1990). Fay (1987) and Apple (1990) both agree that the researcher needs to live in the classroom, and in Apple's words, "to see the complex forms of interation that occur in classrooms" in order to "see how knowledge is actually created and used in school settings" (p. 17). In accordance with Bogdan and Biklin (1982), this study, which is based on the view that the response to literature occurs as a transaction between the reader and text and is influenced by the context of the response (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1990; and Rosenblatt, 1978), emphasized the subjective aspects of individual's behaviours. Students were observed involved in everyday activities in the setting of their regular classroom. The qualitative orientation used in this study is based on the view that "It is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality. Reality, consequently is 'socially constructed'" (Bogdan and Biklin, 1982, p. 32).

My role in this study, to explore the nature of children's responses to literature, meant entering the lifeworld of the children through observing their

lived experiences in the classroom context in which they responded to literature. This meant not only observing but participating. In being a participant-observer, I felt I could assume a closer relationship with individuals in the classroom to get to know how they interpreted and lived experiences that emerged in that context. Gay (1981) contends, "In participant observation, the observer actually becomes a part of, a participant in the situation to be observed" (p. 170). This technique permitted the observer to gain close contact with the key informants in the study, to describe their perspectives, and to interpret data in light of involvement and understanding of the whole situation.

Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) description of the characteristics of qualitative research exemplifies the methodology used in this research.

Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. In this study the nature of children's responses could best be understood in the context of the classroom in which they occurred. The researcher went to the classroom.

Qualitative research is descriptive. The approach taken in this study was to collect data on the premise that observations of key informants as they interacted with people and literature had potential to illuminate the nature of children's responses to literature.

Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. Data such as observation notes, interviews, and oral and written responses were collected that would describe the process of children's involvement in the context as they made sense of it and responded to various literature within it.

Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. Referred to as grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967), this method exemplifies the approach taken in which the trends or ideas that develop lead to the discovery of an hypothesis or hypotheses. These hypotheses then become more clear and take shape through further discoveries and comparisons, and eventually are verified as extensions to existing theory or new theory (Strauss, 1990).

Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. The nature of this study made it extremely important to define as closely as possible, through perception checking, informants unique interpretations of experiences and situations.

> Qualitative researchers in education can continually be found asking questions of the people they are learning from to discover what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences, and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live. (Psanthas, 1973, in Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 31)

## Selection of the Classroom

In order to explore the nature of children's responses to literature, it was decided to identify a classroom in which the children had been involved in responding to literature, and in which it was presumed that they had free choice in books they read. Also, as pointed out by Fine and Sandstrom (1988), because preadolescent children are "developing a finely attuned sense of self-presentation" (p. 49), they have a sense of their own authority" (p. 50), "and are beginning to explore the ways in which they fit into society" (p. 42), children at

this age level were selected as key informants. For this reason, and because there has been little research in reader response with preadolescents, it was decided to choose a classroom of grade five and/or six students.

Two sites identified as possibilities for this research were both multiaged grade five and six classrooms in elementary schools in middle-income urban areas. The first school was not familiar to me; I had never been in it, did not know the teachers or the administration, and was not familiar with the community or anyone in it. The second was familiar to the extent that I had taught in that school, knew many of the children, teachers, administrators, and parents. Since the study was to take place over an intensive eleven week period of time, the classroom finally chosen was the second, the one in which I had taught.

Many of the children in the grade five and six class chosen for the study had been in a class I had taught in a previous year. In the year leading up to the study, I had returned to the school for full or half day visits about every third week. I had also done two projects in other classrooms of this school, one requiring three weekly visits, and the other three bi-weekly visits.

The choice of classroom for the study was made on the basis that the researcher had already developed a positive working relationship with one of the teachers, having team taught with her for two years, and a more distant but positive working relationship with the second, having been on committees while teaching in the same school. Though the researcher knew, but had not worked with the third teacher, it was felt that already knowing two of the teachers and most of the children would ease the phase of acclimation.

## Access to the Classroom and Selection of Key Informants

Once the classroom had been identified, certain procedures had to be followed. Permission was first obtained from the principal of the school, who needed to know the length of the study, time commitment expected of teachers, and the nature of gathering data. The principal, in turn, met with the teachers to obtain their permission. Once the teachers approved, I met with them to more clearly describe my role as participant-observer, to make them aware that I wanted them to continue in their regular routines and activities, and to assure them that other than interviews and perception checking, the study would not require undue time from them. I also identified procedures for and their involvement in helping me identify key informants, and together we arranged a time frame for the study.

In this particular school, parents or guardians of each child registered in that school had been required to sign release forms for their children to be involved as participants in research projects. These release forms covered photographing, audio recording, video taping, and material produced by children.

On the first morning of the study, I met with all of the students in the class to explain that I would be observing, writing notes for myself, interviewing, collecting samples of work, tape recording, and would be in the classroom every day for the next eleven weeks. I pointed out that I was interested in the kinds of things they did through each school day, which included the books they were reading. I also explained that I would be leaving a tape recorder ready for taping on a designated cupboard, which they could use at any time. I began the

actual study the next day, confident that everything was in place. However, everything did not fall into place as easily as I had expected.

During the first two days of the study, because it was so easy to be one of the team, I found I had to orient myself to a role other than teacher in order to focus on collection of data. The teachers also seemed to have difficulty seeing me in another role, and on the first day, I had to ward off requests to file mounds of loose sheets, clear off bulletin boards, and run for things. The children, who were accustomed to having visitors in the classroom, and to me being around from previous teaching, collecting data for assignments, and visits, had less difficulty. Having had several months to establish relations with their teachers, they seemed to view them as having formal authority in the classroom, and from the beginning mostly ignored my presence. Their eagerness to be interviewed or talk informally was not exclusive to me, as they did the same with other adults. Other teachers and administrators in the school reacted as though I was still part of the staff, and some apologized for not acknowledging my presence, commenting on how natural it seemed to see me around the school.

There were other major discomforts. Writing fieldnotes was not as easy as I had anticipated, particularly when what was happening in the classroom did not match my preconceived notions. I not only felt disoriented as a participant-observer, but my notes for the first two days reflected my struggle to accept what I was actually seeing, and reluctance in distancing myself when the classroom turned out to be different than what I had expected. By the third day my notes began to reflect a process of recognizing and discarding old notions, a move toward seeing the classroom more objectively, being honest about what I saw,

and recognition that I had no ownership over what was happening. This process involved psychologically distancing myself from the familiarity of the classroom and seeing the individuals within this context as strangers. This entire process helped me to move from viewing what I first perceived as familiar to viewing it as unfamiliar. By the fourth day, I found my notes were beginning to capture the lived experiences of those within the context of the classroom. By the fifth day, I felt more comfortable in my role, with ten weeks to go.

After five days of general observations in the classroom, taking notes, and interviews, I had narrowed the list of possible key informants from 15 to 10 and on the sixth day, with input from the teachers, arrived at a list of six children. The main criteria for my choice of informants was that they would be independent readers and that they would enjoy reading. I believed that if they met these criteria they would choose stories they liked to read, might have a better understanding of the literature they read, would be able to express their thoughts about their reading, and would be more likely to write responses to stories they read. I was also fascinated by the fact that many of the children in this class wrote responses to literature on their own even though it was no longer a teacher expectation. I chose children who were doing this. The six children will be described in Chapter IV of this study.

In the role of participant-observer in this study, I participated in all of the school activities that involved any of the six children from this classroom. This included assemblies, one field trip, popcorn day, fluorescent day, sports day, and on two occasions, listening to authors of children's books speak. Though I had identified the six key informants, I worked at not drawing attention to them and

continued to interact with as many of the other children as possible in the same ways in which I interacted with key informants. I collected and read their responses, stories they wrote, and other things they produced. They used the tape recorder and were involved in interviews and group discussions with peers. However, only transcripts and artifacts that were collected from key informants were retained for analysis after the end of the study.

## Data Collection

According to Bruyn (1966), the criteria and evidence for the validity of description and explanation in a study rests in the accurate portrayal of the world of the subjects. This accurate portrayal, according to Bogdan and Biklin (1982), includes collection of data that will accurately describe individuals, the context, and possible meanings that social situations have for individuals in them.

A confirmation strategy was used during collection of data to ensure that my interpretations were accurate from the points of view of teachers and children. This strategy, referred to as perception checking, involved informally asking the children and teachers for confirmation or clarification of my perceptions and interpretations. For example, when children were observed writing responses even though teachers did not request them, I confirmed or clarified my perceptions about this happening with both teachers and children.

Triangulation, which is commonly understood as multiple methods of data collection, was also used in this study (Jick, 1979). It was felt that as well as helping to confirm findings, triangulation might be useful in helping to alleviate problems which might occur when the participant-observer entered the study

being familiar with the setting and having known the subjects prior to the study. This involved the collection of various kinds of data described below, including extensive observation notes, formal and informal interviews, audio recorded responses and conversations of children, written responses, and a collection of many artifacts and projects.

Observation Notes

Fieldnotes (Bogdan and Biklin, 1982) consisted of two levels. One level was a written description of setting, people, actions, and conversations as they were seen through direct observation or in conjunction with other data collection methods. These notes included detailed portraits of the children, verbatim transcripts and reconstruction of dialogue, descriptions of the physical setting, accounts of particular events and depiction of activities. The second level consisted of reflective observations that provided the observer's more personal account of the descriptive fieldnotes. These were made during school breaks such as recess or noon, or at the end of the day to capture the observer's ideas, concerns, hunches, speculations, and impressions (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982).

Interviews

Formal interviews were held with individual children concerning their views on reading and responding, with teachers about their views on reading and responding, and with parents about their views of home influences on their child's reading. Informal interviews and discussions between children and adults and between children and children were also collected through audio recordings or reconstructed in writing. Informal interviews were held for clarification and

for perception checking with children and teachers.

Audio-recorded Responses

Audio recorded responses were collected in two ways. In the first, the children were informed that a tape recorder with a tape in it would be left on the counter by the sink. They were told they could voluntarily talk on the tape recorder, alone, in pairs, or in groups whenever they wanted. Some children recorded regularly, others not as often. Some chose to record conversations with peers, and on two occasions they recorded in groups. Only talk that was related to responses or responding was transcribed from the taped recordings.

Written Responses

The children all owned response journals which they had used between September and February. During this period of time, the children were expected to write responses to stories they read, and hand them in to one of their teachers each day. The teacher then wrote a response to the child's response. The teachers found this extremely time consuming and it was discontinued. However, most of the children continued to voluntarily write responses in their journals after February and continued until the end of June. These journals plus other slips of paper that responses were written on were collected.

Collection of Artifacts and Projects

Copies of notices going home to parents, newsletters, report cards, program descriptions, children's project folders, children's completed stories, and other

various artifacts were collected.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis, the process of systematically searching through field notes, transcripts, written work, and other collected material, helped initially to identify hunches about recurring themes and patterns of behaviour. The continuous feelings of scepticism that accompanied this analysis eventually evolved into a deeper level of analysis in which these themes and patterns were compared, and ideas synthesized. This process helped to create understandings of the data and facilitated communication of discoveries to others. Though Bogdan and Biklin (1982) suggest two modes of analysis, -- first, in the field analysis conducted concurrently with data collection, and second, post-site analysis done after all the data has been collected -- most attention was given to post-site analysis. There were two underlying reasons for giving more attention to post-site analysis: first, to focus as much attention as possible on a thorough collection of data, and second, to enable a distancing from the familiarity of the setting and participants before doing an extensive analysis.

### In the Field Analysis

Data collected each day were reread at the end of the day, observer comments were written about ideas generated, and unfocused or irrelevant data were noted. Clarification of perceptions was sought informally as the study proceeded.

Post-site Analysis

The post-site analysis involved coding and the interpretation of data. This began with an extensive and thorough elaboration of the data by reading and then rereading, while jotting down insights as they emerged about patterns of individual behaviours and relationships between responses made by children and their interpretations of context. During this stage of analysis my methods were guided by but not locked into Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) suggestions for developing coding categories which involved cutting data into strips, placing strips in folders, and recording the words or phrases that represented the category on index cards. All data, including descriptive fieldnotes, reflective observations, transcripts of interviews, responses and group discussions, children's written responses, and the total collection of projects and artifacts, were read, re-read, sorted, and labelled with various coloured post-it notes and written reports. As I read and reread, I kept track of and recorded potential themes or ideas that I felt should be checked against other data sources. The cross checking involved moving back and forth between field notes of observations and interview transcripts. After the period of becoming refamiliar with the data that had been collected, my analysis became more systematic with two levels of analysis taking place both concurrently and separately. The first level was descriptive and involved analysis of data to describe dimensions of the classroom context, provide a view of a typical day in the classroom, and describe the lived experiences of each child in that context. These results, which the teachers in this study had read and agreed with, are presented in Chapter IV. They frame the nature of responses presented in Chapter V.

The second level was deeper and involved analysis of data to search for and determine trends in the nature of children's responses to literature in the context of this classroom and the broader community. This analysis involved the identification of children's social constructions of various interpretive communities within the context of the classroom.

The responses were then organized and reorganized into modes of response and interpretive communities in which children responded. I then compared one child's responses in various interpretive communities, and compared children's responses with each others in the same interpretive community and between various interpretive communities. Codes for various classifications of responses and interpretive communities were established, and it was during this process that perspectives were identified through which children's responses were made. These perspectives are presented in Chapter V.

## Summary

This study was designed to explore the nature of children's responses to literature in the context of one classroom. Observation notes consisting of narrative fieldnotes and reflective observations, formal and informal interviews with individual children, teachers, and parents, audio recorded responses and conversations, written responses, and various artifacts and projects were collected over an 11 week period and combined and analyzed to provide a description of the context of the classroom and the nature of six children's responses within it. Analysis of data took place to a limited extent in the field, but was mainly done post site.

# CHAPTER IV

# THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe dimensions of the context of the classroom in which this study took place. Since the purpose of this study is to explore the nature of the six children's responses to literature, it is important to know the context in which the responses occur. This description will also introduce various interpretive communities which seem to be shaped by the children's interpretations of social interaction both within and outside the context of the classroom.

The components of the context that will be described were chosen because they provide the most complete and accurate picture of the context as it was observed and as it appeared to be experienced by individuals within it. These are the school and classroom in which the study took place, an outline of one typical school day in the classroom, the lived experiences of each of the children in the context of their classrom, and views from the perspectives of parents about each of the children as readers.

## The School Context

Parkway is a large elementary school in western Canada with an enrolment at the time of the study of 395 students between kindergarten and grade six. About 20% of the students came from the immediate community and about 80%

were bused from surrounding communities within a 10 km radius.

The students came from both high and low socio-economic communities and were from both single and two-parent families. Their housing varied from subsidized housing to estate properties. The staff in this school consisted of administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff (secretaries, workroom aides, library aides, and caretakers), and part-time lunchroom supervisors.

The Physical Design and Setting of the School

The school is open area in design and is divided into classrooms by flexible folding walls. Each classroom consists of clusters of two or three areas which could be separated by flexible folding walls. Apart from kindergarten, the rest of the classes are multiaged. There are two classes of grades one and two, two classes of grades three and four, and two classes of grades five and six.

Though the school is rectangular in shape, the flexible folding walls have been installed in ways that create varied sizes and shapes of classrooms in the school. The library is centrally located, and the gymnasium, offices, workroom, nurses room, staff room, and front entrance are at one end of the school while two children's entrances are at the other end of the school. The classrooms are located along each side of the school from one end to the other. In addition, other spaces are closed off as single classrooms and designated as the French, Music, Science, Art, and Computer rooms.

The hallways in the schools are wide; coathooks are located in the hall outside each classroom. Bulletin boards also line the hallways and attractively display children's work.

## The Teaching Staff

Teachers in this school, with the exception of specialists were involved in team teaching. Specialist teachers for French, Music, Science, Computers, and Physical Education taught in separate classrooms.

Timetabling, on a four-day rotation, facilitated the movement of children from the classrooms to specialists throughout the day. The children in each classroom were divided into specialist groups, so that one group went to one specialist while the other went to a different specialist. When all of the children from the classroom were at specialists, the teachers were involved in team planning.

The teachers, aside from specialists, were responsible for teaching Language Arts, Social Studies, Health, Art, and Math. The philosophy throughout the school was to integrate these subjects through unit planning.

## The Classroom Context

The classroom in which I collected data was a kidney shaped open area room in which three teachers team taught a group of 56 children aged 10 to 13 years in grades five and six. The children in this classroom were divided into smaller groups of four, five, or six, who sat together at clusters of desks. Each cluster included children from both grades and most included both genders. Sometimes the whole class would be divided into two or three groups for different instructional purposes. The clusters of desks were arranged so that space was left to create two small and one large open area in the room, and these areas were used to gather groups for instruction, discussions, or lectures.

The children were expected to go directly to their cluster upon arrival in the classroom, at dismissal time, at lunch time, and at other times when directed to work or read there. Absentees and late arrivals were determined according to who was missing at clusters.

Quiet reading times for the children were scheduled to coincide with the teacher's attendance checks and collection of notes and homework, and immediately followed arrival into the classroom in the morning and after lunch. This took 10 to 15 minutes, and then children would be asked to move on to various instructional groups.

The children's desks each had a tray where they could store things, and many had shelves under their chair seats where they also stored things. The children each had a container, varying from worn cardboard boxes to bear shaped jars sitting on their desks, where they kept pencils, pens, erasers, and treasures.

Even though they kept their books, duotangs, and other personal items in trays at their desks, the children had no real ownership over their place at the cluster. When they were in any of the various instructional groups, unless specifically directed, they would work at the cluster nearest the centre of instruction. Hence, they were required to take what they might need when they went for instruction.

The two small and one large open areas were each located near chalkboards. The two small areas were not referred to in any particular way except "over there," but the large area, used more in this classroom, was called "the area." Apart from the chalkboards, four bulletin boards, covered in bright

yellow, took up most of the wall space. Displays consisted mainly of teacher-prepared or purchased materials. The words "Our Writer's Cycle", "Reading". "Poetry-Stories-Comics" and "Greek Studies" were set in the middle of each bulletin board and surrounded by words depicting related ideas in smaller letters as follows:

OUR WRITER'S CYCLE Prewriting Drafting Sharing Revising Editing Presenting Evaluation (Several stories written by children were attached along the bottom of this bulletin board).

READING (Several book jackets surrounded these letters).

POETRY-STORIES-COMICS What will I choose? What will my plan be?

GREEK STUDY Greek Gods Greek Goddesses Physical needs, Social needs, Psychological needs.

The Language Arts Program

Each block was responsible for planning its own language arts program, and at each of the three reporting times, provided a description of it that was included with report cards sent home to parents.

In the November previous to this study, the Language Arts program for September, October, and November was described as having been made up of writing, paragraph dictation, and community of readers. This description stated that there had been 30 minutes of daily writing which moved from rough drafts to final drafts. Paragraph dictation was described as having three objectives: to strengthen memory, to expand knowledge of word structure, and to automatize the children's use of mechanics of writing. Community of readers was described

as a reading program in which students read similar novels in groups, then wrote responses to which the teachers responded.

In March, the Language Arts program for December, January, and February was described as having been made up of silent reading for 10 minutes when children arrived and 30 minutes at another part of the day, log books, book promotions, and literature study. The log books were used for teachers and students to correspond about materials read, and book promotions were presented by children to share their reading experiences with the whole class. The literature study was described as a focus on the nature of charity and the power of tenderness through using the stories The Christmas Carol, The Match Girl, and The Little Fir Tree. The study of myths was described as integrated with the Social Studies unit on Greece.

In June, the Language Arts program for April, May, and June was described as including a fiesta, a literature study, and reflective responses. The fiesta was described as a read, write and illustrate connection in which teacher-directed lessons focused on a variety of writing styles and techniques such as metaphors, similes, and personification to express ideas. The program description also stated that writing, illustrating, and end product were emphasized, and student work was displayed for students, staff, and parents to view. The literature study was described as having small groups read and discuss teacher selected stories, with an emphasis on developing student understanding of factual, interpretive and evaluation questions with a goal that students might eventually replace the teacher in the role of discussion leader. Reflective response was described as a time when students and teachers read together followed by the students

reflecting and responding to the material read. This program description also noted that students had been encouraged to share reactions, information, and opinions about books in presentations.

Literature was included in the classroom as part of the Language Arts program in various ways. The children had free choice of books from the school library which was across the hall from the classroom. Book exchange was not time tabled into the daily schedule. The children were given permission to exchange their books when their work was complete or immediately after school. The library was also open for book exchange at lunch hours, but I seldom saw children from this classroom exchange books at that time. On three occasions during the study, the children whose names appeared on the 'books overdue' list were asked to exchange their books just prior to lunch.

The children recorded the title of each book they read, the author, and the date they finished reading it on reading log sheets which the teachers had given them at the beginning of the year. This sheet was to be used only for books read at school. From time to time throughout the study, the teachers would ask to see individual children's log sheets, look them over, and initial them. The children were also free to bring books from home. They were not allowed to read magazines or comics in the classroom, and the books of certain authors such as Stephen King, were discouraged.

Literature was also included in other ways during a one hour period of time that appeared on the daily schedule as 'community of readers'. It was explained that community of readers had been dropped because there were now more language arts activities. During the study, this period of time seemed to be used

for project work in which the children were writing stories, direct-teaching lessons in the use of quotation marks, writing responses, and spelling once a week. Silent reading often took place during part of this period of time.

During silent reading, 10 minutes after arrival in the morning and after lunch and 30 minutes at another part of the day, the children read books of their choice. These were books they had borrowed from the school library, a community library, or their personal copies.

A literature unit based on The Christmas Carol, The Match Girl, and The Little Fir Tree had been presented during the week prior to the Christmas break. It was explained by the teachers that during this unit the class had been divided into three groups which rotated through a series of activities, including oral and silent reading, teachers reading to groups of children, films, and teacher led discussions related to the story being studied.

The Daily Schedule

The daily schedule in the classroom was closely tied to a four day rotation in timetabling that facilitated specialist teaching in French, Computers, Music, Physical Education, and Science throughout the school. Aside from these set times, the remainder of the time table was planned by the classroom teachers. Though the time table for the classroom indicated times for community of readers, Health, conference writing, Math, Social Studies/Language Arts, and Art, the actual subject focus and specific activities during these times were planned by the teachers and varied according to current emphasis on reading or writing. Times designated by the block teachers for Math and Art were seldom

altered and direct teaching usually preceded student activities in these subjects. Social Studies, which involved the completion of a Greek unit, took place for only one week and Health for only three weeks after observations began in this classroom. The teachers said they had finished the Health curriculum, and there wasn't time to complete another Social Studies unit.

The children each had a copy of the time table in their trays or taped onto their desk tables.

9:15 Students arrive Specialists.

10:15 Recess

10:30 Community of Readers Day 2, 4 Health

11:30 Language Arts

12:00 Conference Writing

12:30 Lunch

1:15 Students arrive. Quiet Reading

1:30 Math

2:30 Social Studies/Language Arts Day 3 Art

Classroom Routines

These routines, established by teachers, reflected the nature of the social relations between teachers and children. They also reflected teacher and child ideologies about authority in the classroom. Teachers had more power than children and this authority provided them with certain privileges. The view of power held in this study is related to Foucault's (1982) notion that power involves a relationship and to Weber's (1947) definition that one individual in a

relationship will be in a potition to carry out his own will despite resistance. For example, when the children in this classroom were told to read quietly, the teachers could talk and interrupt them, and teachers could change or stop certain events from occurring.

> Neil checks the VCR which sits in the room. "Hey! Clash of the Titans." Excitement permeates the room. A teacher enters, "O.K. you guys, back to your clusters and read, or there won't be any Clash of the Titans." Everyone gets out a book. The room is quiet. (Fieldnotes, May 11, 1990)

The classroom routines also reflected the use of teacher authority for enforcing a certain standard of behaviour. One day when the children entered the classroom noisily, they were told to put their heads down on their desks.

> They do so, and it is very quiet. After five minutes, "Everyone meet me in the area." The children move to the area very quietly. (Fieldnotes, May 23, 1990)

These routines also seemed to have underlying rules for controlling the physical movement of children from one area to another, keeping them quiet, or focusing their attention. The children, for the most part, followed the routines automatically and seemed able to predict what would be happening next without paying much attention. The routines also gave implicit messages about hierarchies of power in the school. When an administrator entered the classroom, the teachers and children would look more busy, and the children were aware that if an administrator wanted to talk to them, their work would be interrupted, they would listen from where they were, or they would all meet in the area. In contrast, near the end of the year, the caretaker came into the

classroom and said,

> "I need to talk to these kids." One teacher replied, "Well, I'm in the middle of a lesson." Just then another teacher who hadn't heard the conversation, came in and said, "Bill needs to talk to the kids." The first teacher replied, "Can't it wait? I'm in the middle of a lesson." Bill left. (Fieldnotes, )

Key phrases used by teachers also helped shape the context of the classroom, as these phrases indicated what would be happening next and signalled particular expectations from the students.

"Do quiet reading" meant to sit at a cluster, without talking, and read a self selected book. This was not a time to go to the library, so children who did not have a book often borrowed one or read something they or someone else had written. During quiet reading, the teachers usually took attendance, collected notes or money, or finalized plans for the day. Children were also told to do quiet reading when their work was complete and had been initialled by a teacher.

"Go to the area" meant that all of the children, unless otherwise designated, were to go without talking to the largest of the three open areas in the classroom. There they were to sit cross-legged on the floor facing a large chalkboard and two large lined chart paper stands, and the teacher whose turn it was to teach would wait for them to get settled before beginning the lesson. The other two teachers walked about the classroom hurrying children to move to the area.

"Catch up time" meant to work on uncompleted work. This phrase was

often used when a child finished an activity or when nothing had been planned. Children were asked to hand in work they finished during these times for marking and to be recorded by a teacher as complete.

"Clean your tray" was a phrase used at the end of the day about once a week and meant children were to tidy their trays, sort out loose papers, and place them in appropriate duotangs. This was usually quite a noisy time with lots of movement and talking. The children appeared to enjoy doing this and if caught throwing uncompleted work out, explained it as an accident.

"Work in your cluster" meant working on an activity at a cluster. Permission was often given to sit and work on the floor or along the wall in an area of the classroom. Occasionally, permission was given to work in the hallway.

"Flicking the lights" off and on quickly created a startle effect and was used as a technique to get everyone's attention when a teacher wanted to speak.

Content

The teachers chose the content to be covered and monitored the children's work closely. The project approach in which children could choose a project to complete was explained by the teachers as a way to facilitate individual learning. However, other than the emphasis given to each child making an initial choice of topic, expectations were the same for everyone. One major project in this classroom during this study involved the children in writing a book. It included several stages and to ensure certain criteria being met, children's work had to be initialled after each stage.

"You must have a teacher O.K. it before you go on. Now, only an adult can

O.K. this, not your friend." Later, "Double check to be sure you're right. Now, if you don't remember what I've said, ask an adult." (Fieldnotes, Mrs. Brown, May 22, 1990)

At one point the teachers extended the deadline for the book making projects, then gave the children additional and more specific guidelines for completing them, and discussed evaluation.

"When a teacher takes your work and criticizes it, it is criticized for a very special reason. You have lots to think about and you have to be able to accept teacher's criticisms. We evaluate to help you do better work." (Fieldnotes, Mrs. Massey, May 24, 1990)

To ensure quality of presentation, the teachers all became involved in the final stage of the children's completion of their projects. One teacher typed some of the children's stories, while another used a sewing machine to sew pages together for each child. The third photocopied typed stories to facilitate nicer illustrating. The children, aware of expectations for the final product, busily wrote and illustrated at their clusters.

Sometimes quality expected and time available were contradictory. For example, one day when the children were really involved in perfecting the final copies of their project books, Mrs. Scott called for their attention.

"This is now time for art." Many of the students are reluctant to put things away. Mrs. Scott sounding irritated, speaks louder, "If you want art put your things away right now before I count to 10." She begins counting and the children hurry to put things away. (Fieldnotes, May 29, 1990)

Completion of projects always led to a display of them in a highly trafficked area

such as the library or in the hallway.

Teacher knowledge of what should be taught and quality of work produced was reflected in many ways in this classroom. One example was the project already referred to. Another was the responses children wrote to stories they had read to which teachers had responded. A view that children needed help in responding and that teachers could help them is reflected in one of the teacher's comments,

> "Well, they have very little abstract reasoning at this age. Therefore it's very difficult for them to make a response. They need to say more and you can only draw it out if you ask the appropriate questions." (Interview, June 12, 1990)

During another interview a different teacher commented,

> "I think they need to be guided at this age. Otherwise they miss so much valuable learning. Help and direction is better for their understanding and asking questions and answering questions, all of that they need, and a teacher must be present to keep them focused." (Interview, June 22, 1990)

Then later in the study, the teachers discussed a series of readers called The Junior Great Readers. A teacher in another classroom personally owned the only copy, which she said she bought in "the states", and which she had introduced to other teachers in the school earlier in the year. She had highlighted its value in terms of questioning techniques. After some discussion the teachers in the classroom of the study agreed that there needed to be more time provided for reading.

"We better get back to reading, but they can't read without some guidance . . . . we will introduce and teach the three types of questioning -- factual, interpretive, and evaluative -- to help them with their reading." (Fieldnotes, May 31, 1990)

However, the teacher who owned the readers could not lend them at that time. Alhough the teachers introduced the three types of questioning to the children, this idea for a reading program was not really implemented by the end of June.

A Typical Day In The Classroom

The nature of events each day in this classroom followed the same general plan. The students arrived, went to specialists, proceeded through various stages in project completion, did Math, and returned to project work or did Art later in the day. Most appeared to enjoy reading, took advantage of scheduled quiet reading time, and found additional time to read whenever they could. Each day was filled with a great deal to do, generally seemed rushed, and passed quickly. The fieldnotes for May 8, 1990 provide the source for the following outline of a typical day in this classroom:

9:15. The children arrive and Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Scott are in the hall hurrying them into the classroom as they hang their things on their coathooks, dig their homework out of their knapsacks, and either put on or carry their runners into the classroom.

As they enter the classroom, the children are told to do quiet reading by Mrs. Massey who is walking around clusters holding a small orange paper and writing names of those absent or late on it. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Scott collect homework sheets and check names of those who have handed it in on a class

list. The children are reminded that if they didn't do or forgot their homework, they will be assigned the sheet again.

Mrs. Scott flicks the lights off and on and tells the children to line up for Music and Phys. Ed. The children quickly form into lines at each of the two doors and leave. The teachers sit at a table to plan.

Mrs. Brown begins, "Let's try getting the whole week planned. Is there anything unusual happening?" A question arises about how the fiesta sign up is to work, and while Mrs. Brown goes to get this information, the other two teachers fill in the weekly plan with Mrs. Massey's name for attendance and Mrs. Scott's name for recess supervision.

Mrs. Brown returns, the teachers sort out how the sign up will work, and they plan procedures by which the children will make their choices for presentations they wish to attend. The three teachers then plan the math program for the week.

Planning then focuses on projects, "What about their projects?" "Well, everyone's made their choice now." "They'll need lots of help if we want their book to turn out." "We'll have to check on our timing." Then, after some discussion about the children continuing to write responses to literature in their journals though teachers no longer request them to do so, Mrs. Brown adds, "I really should look at their response journals since they're writing, but it does take so long."

10:15. As children return, they are told to go out for recess.

10:30. The children come in from recess, most carrying their shoes, talking, and laughing. The teachers hurry them to go to their clusters where many are

still talking and others are reading. "O.K., everyone go to the area." Some children move slowly over to the area, some rush over and save spaces for others, and eventually they are all sitting on the floor in front of a large chart with the words "Quotation Marks" in large print on it. Once everyone is settled, Mrs. Brown, sitting facing the children, asks what quotation marks are and what they are used for and as several hands go up, invites one person at a time to respond. She shows an overhead projection of a dog sitting in a begging position in front of a man, draws a speech balloon over the dog, and asks for suggestions of what the dog may be saying. Darwin offers, "Would you like to buy a box of chocolates for $1.99?", and she records the question in the balloon. She then writes sentences on the board and asks for volunteers to add quotation marks as needed. Two children volunteer, one is asked to insert quotation marks, and the other to correct it. The teacher works the children through a few more examples.

Then Mrs. Brown glances at the clock, says there isn't much time left, and informs the children that they will each have an individual activity to do. She adds that before they return to their clusters, she'd like them to think of words they may use besides 'said' in sentences. She records the words on the chalkboard as they suggest "inquired", "exclaimed", "questioned", and "whispered". The children are each given two sheets, one with photocopied pictures of story characters, the other blank, and told they have 20 minutes in which to cut out two characters, paste them on the blank sheet, and write conversations between them. As well, they must write a short story which includes this conversation. The children proceed back to their clusters, many taking time to sharpen or look

for pencils or get a drink. The teachers hurry them along, "which ones are you choosing?" "quickly cut them out", "what are you going to have them saying here?"

As the children work on the activity, the teachers move around the room initialling work they consider complete. One teacher seems to focus more on spelling while another pays more attention to the content of the conversation. Darwin's sheet, not yet initialled, is sitting on the table in front of him and he is reading. Suddenly he whispers loudly, "Yes! I was right!" One of the teachers looks over to him asking, "Darwin, what are you doing? Put that book away and bring me your work." Darwin stuffs his book into his tray, picks up the sheet of work, and takes it over to her. She looks at it, taps it with her pen, and says, "This is not done Darwin, look at the spelling. You fix this." Darwin trudges back to his chair and works on the sheet. He then takes it to another teacher who initials it for him.

11:35. Mrs. Brown glances at the clock, "O.K., if you're not finished, this activity is to be completed at home and brought back tomorrow. Put all the scissors and glue away." Mrs. Scott assists the children as they move around the room putting scissors and glue in appropriate places.

The lights are flicked again, "Meet me in the area quickly. We've already lost five minutes of our time." The children move to the area, some appear to be taking their time, and the teachers hurry them along.

Mrs. Brown waits quietly for everyone to join her at the area where she sits on a chair and the children sit on the floor facing her. She then looks at her watch, "Now, we've lost 15 minutes." Finally, everyone is gathered and listening,

"How many of you have begun making plans for your R.W.I. story, comic, or poetry?" A few hands are raised. "O.K., if you've started you can go and get to work. Remember your plan must be approved and initialled by a teacher before you begin to write your story." About ten children get up, some return to their chairs, and as some line up to get their plans initialled, they clutch their folders, twirl on one foot, hop, lean on each other, and talk.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Brown teaches a review lesson on how to do plans. She goes over how they can use who, what, where, when, and how to help them in making plans. A few students seem to be paying attention. Many are playing with their shoelaces, soles of their shoes, someone else's hair, or rolling their socks up and down. Some are just looking around.

Then, "O.K., now you have 15 minutes to work on your plan. You should have these done and initialled in two days. Back to your chairs. No time to waste." Everyone seems to be working quietly. The teachers move from cluster to cluster.

12:30. "Everyone put your things away. It's time for lunch." Darwin goes up to Mrs. Massey, "Can I stay in to read at noon?" She replies, "No, number one, you can't read while you're eating. Number two, no one will be in here after lunch so you'll have to go out too." The lunchroom supervisors arrive and the teachers leave.

1:15. The students come in after noon recess. Most of the children are talking and laughing. The teachers hurry them into the classroom with comments such as, "come on", "hurry", "get in now", "you're missing quiet reading."

Mrs. Massey is going around the room doing attendance, and all three teachers are saying things such as "read", "hurry and read", "get out your book", "what are you reading?", "no, you can't go to the library", and so on.

1:30. The students are reading quietly. Mrs. Massey and Mrs. Scott are talking and as Mrs. Brown rolls an overhead trolley to one of the teaching areas, she announces, "O.K. everyone. Bring your pencils, erasers, and Math scribblers to your math group." The children move in three different directions to their math groups. One teacher teaches perimeters, one area, and the third time. Each teacher begins with a direct teaching lesson, then hands out sheets of work to complete. One of the teachers says loudly, "If you're not finished, consider the rest to be homework." Everyone works and it is quiet in the classroom.

2:35. The lights are flicked and Mrs. Scott says, "Oh no, it's five minutes over. O.K. everyone quickly hand in your work if it's finished. If not, it's homework." She adds, "Quickly everyone, we've gone over time and we need to get to the area." The children slowly put things away, and eventually everyone is at the area sitting on the floor and facing Mrs. Scott who is sitting on a chair. She waits for them to get settled and says, "Now, we want those plans finished today. We have a plan format that will help you and we'd like everyone to fill this in before you go on to complete your plan. The only people who don't have to do this are those writing poetry."

Mrs. Scott then goes over each of the headings on the format -- story genre, story line, characters, and setting -- and gives examples of what might be written in each section. Many of the children are playing with shoes, socks, others' hair, or stretching their T-shirts over their knees as she talks.

After the lesson, the children return to their clusters to work on this plan. There are many questions, and the teachers are busy. Then, "Oh dear, it's home time. O.K. everyone take this for homework. We'll let you go when we see your cluster is ready." The students rush to look ready to leave.

3:30. The children leave as they are dismissed, cluster by cluster. The teachers encourage those in the hallway to leave and then go to the library for a meeting.

This was a typical day in this classroom and the teachers seemed busy keeping activities on schedule. The children appeared to follow routines while at the same time seeming to actively reinterpret instructions to meet their own needs and desires. For example, forms of resistance were seen in the way they put things away slowly, got drinks, or sharpened pencils when moving to the area. The children in this classroom seemed to be busy in many different activities throughout the day and each day, just as this one, passed quickly.

## The Lived Experience of the Classroom

During the analysis of data, trends emerged that became categories under which the lived experiences of the classroom of each of the key informants could be described. The following descriptions of each child's lived exerience is preceded by an individual profile of the child that is based on the researcher's observations. The individual profile is followed by a description of the child's experiences in the classroom in terms of peers and friends, time to read, and knowledge and authority.

Cameron

Individual Profile. Cameron, blue eyed and good looking, had short blond hair that always looked neat. Just as most boys his age, he wore loose fitting T-shirts and brightly coloured shorts or rugby pants. Cameron, being tall and sturdy, was large for his age. He wore size 12 shoes and other boys often measured their shoes against his. Cameron was a gentle and considerate person who seemed to be liked by everyone.

Peers and Friends. Cameron's friends were important to him in the classroom. He kept a friendship book in which he asked peers to record names, addresses, and various data, such as favourite songs, musical groups, colours, favourite T.V. shows, and so on. He always sat beside one or more friends, and if he couldn't, would be constantly looking over to them. He was big and would save room for friends in the area by spreading his legs out, then moving in to make room as they arrived.

Cameron liked to be perceived as well behaved and knew that being quiet was one way to achieve this. He also believed he could read better when others weren't talking and let peers at his cluster know. The following was observed during the first week of the study,

> Cameron is slouched in his chair, book on his chest, head hidden behind his book. He says, "S-h-h" when others at his cluster talk. They stop. (Fieldnotes, April 20, 1990)

The students at Cameron's cluster all enjoyed books and reading except for Tak. Tak had been in the school three years ago and had been moved to a behaviour adaptation class at another school. This year he returned, and though

his behaviour had improved, he had already been labelled as "bad". Very few students liked him. Most avoided him. Cameron took Tak in as a friend, was extremely patient with him, and worked hard to get him to understand the rules about being quiet and working hard.

The talk at Cameron's cluster was most often about books children had read. They compared numbers of pages read, authors they preferred, story genres, and characters from stories. It seemed to be safe talk. However, early in the study when the cluster members were separated for talking too much, Cameron ended up at a different cluster than his best friend David.

A few days after this, all of the students were told that quiet clusters would be called first to sign up for their choices of presentations to be held in the school. Analysis of observations and field notes revealed that Cameron and David may have seen this as an opportunity to be together.

> Mrs. S. is sending clusters . . . sign up sheet. Mrs. M. is monitoring the sign up . . . . Two students are caught signing up for each other and their names are written on a last to sign up list. Later David is caught signing up for Cameron, and both their names are added to the list. (Fieldnotes, May 9, 1990)

The next week a total reorganization of the room took place, and Cameron and his buddies ended up together again. They worked fast to get their tables and chairs pushed together and were the first to get settled. As they sat looking around at the commotion of everyone else moving, Cameron said, "Be quiet so they don't move us." They all got out their books and began reading. This behaviour was reinforced as within a few minutes their cluster was first to be

dismissed.

Time to Read. Cameron enjoyed reading and read quietly at his cluster during quiet reading times. He also stole minutes to read throughout the day at every opportunity he could. At arrival, he always seemed to go directly to his cluster, get his book out, and read. He was rewarded for this behavior during the first part of the study by being asked to take the attendance slip to the office. This seemed to reinforce his desire to read without interruption. It appeared he found he could do this and also help Tak, who wanted desperately to take the slip but who had been told by the teacher, "I choose people who are sitting still and reading." After he passed the attendance slip he was given to Tak, Tak beamed and left the room with the slip. Cameron wasn't asked to take the slip for the rest of the study, but he never mentioned the loss.

Cameron was not always rewarded for reading quietly. One day Mrs. Massey said she wanted to see everyone in the area. Cameron who either didn't hear or ignored the instruction had to be reminded to put the book away. The researcher's fieldnotes outlined a similar incident on another day,

> Mrs. Massey calls, ". . . line up at the door for computers." Most of the students line up. "O.K. Cameron, off with you." Cameron looks around as if surprised, shoves his book in his drawer and trips on chairs as he runs to join the line at the door. (Fieldnotes, May 1, 1990)

Cameron's desire for quiet, uninterrupted reading time did not appear to be noticed. One day as a group returned from computers at 11:00, Mrs. Massey asked them to meet her in the area where she told them they could read. Then she went to her desk and was busy writing. Researcher fieldnotes went on to

describe the scene,

> Some students are reading, some writing, others are talking. Cameron and David take their books, go out the door and sit together just outside the classroom door and read quietly until the teacher walks toward the door at 11:30 and notices them. "Don't you ever do this again! Next time you sit in your own places, not reading together." Cameron mutters to David in a voice she doesn't appear to hear, "Gosh, it's so noisy in there, we weren't even talking. Not fair."

Knowledge and Authority. Cameron accepted that teachers knew more than he did about school things in the classroom and waited patiently for their approval or assistance on different occasions. During the final stage of a class project, which involved making the cover for a book written by the child, Cameron said to her,

> "I need a cover," and was told, "Cameron, I have to cut one for you. Wait here." He waited for 20 minutes . . . still holding his book and looking around for the teacher, and finally, "O.K. Cameron." He follows her to another table where she measures, cuts a cover, and hands it to him. (Fieldnotes, May 25, 1990)

Cameron's reaction to some activities suggested feelings of self-consciousness. For example, when the book project was complete, the students were given a lesson on how to hold their project book, read the story, and involve the audience in making predictions. They were told to role play for practice. Cameron and David practised together but had difficulty stifling their giggles, and their decision to read their library books instead seemed to be

unnoticed.

Cameron's main interest appeared to be in having time to read. He viewed himself as a good reader and during most of the study, voluntarily wrote responses that were not requested by teachers. On different occasions, he talked about books he was reading with his friends at his cluster while they all worked on projects. He read two kinds of books. One kind seemed to be intriguing to him, yet he knew it was not accepted by the teachers; the other, The Hobbit, was highly acceptable to them, but he didn't seem sure about liking it. He kept them both in his tray.

> Cameron is reading a Stephen King book. Mrs. Massey walks over, takes the book and is holding it. She asks, "When will you be on to good reading?" Cameron replies, "I forgot the Tolkien book at home."
>
> (Fieldnotes, May 29, 1990)

Cameron chose project activities that were easy, fun, and that would leave time for reading. He liked to draw and chose to make comics for his project, spent one day on the script, and six weeks on the illustrations. He would often take breaks to read and talk about books with others at his cluster while he was drawing. He spent hours forming letters for words in his comics such as Bam, Wasp, Whip, Bop, Splash, Poof, talking about books and other personal interests at the same time. He always looked busy.

Cameron also knew how to look and sound productive. Comments that he made such as "today I read another 55 pages", "The Wonderful World Of Henry Sugar is great. I read 30 pages already", and "I wrote three pages, how many have you have done?" gave evidence that he seemed to judge his progress by

numbers of pages, both in writing and in reading. He also gave others advice on how to look productive. One day Darwin told Cameron his goal was to read enough books to fill another sheet which had 25 lines, each filled in by students, and looked at by teachers. Cameron advised him, "Just read comics. It'll be faster."

Cameron looked forward to Junior High and seemed to view this part of school as a stage in his life. One day in a discussion about school with his friends at recess, Cameron said, "We sit too long, my whole body aches. Maybe my build is too big to sit like that. Maybe it'll be different in Junior High."

Because Cameron was in Grade 6, many things happened in the last month of school to reinforce his view that this was a phase of life in school. Special pictures were taken of the sixth graders as a group, they spent a day at a large amusement park, received memory books, and had a graduation ceremony.

Elaine

Individual Profile. Elaine was tall with shoulder length curly brown hair. She had sparkly blue eyes, and always looked happy. She most often wore fluorescent coloured large T-shirts and matching earrings and bracelets which she made herself. She was well liked by peers and teachers and was involved in most of the extra-curricular activities at school. She was a leader for school patrol, a monitor for small equipment at recess, a member of the girl's baseball team, and an eager volunteer whenever one was needed.

Peers and Friends. Elaine's easy smile and conformity to rules seemed to win the favour of her teachers, and her cheerful, supportive nature seemed to

make her popular with other students.

When Elaine had a task to complete, she appeared to devote her entire time to it, often sat alone, and if in a group, worked alone. Once her work was finished, she would usually read quietly, would sometimes offer to help others with their work, or would talk to Sheri.

Elaine sat beside Sheri in a cluster of five other girls. She was friendly to everyone there but talked mostly to Sheri who initiated the conversations. Their talk centred around books, fashions, aspirations to babysit (Elaine was taking the course), and Jazz dancing (Sheri was taking lessons).

When called to go to the area, Elaine always responded quickly, would follow Sheri and they would sit at the front near the teacher. At arrival time, Elaine was one of the first sitting and reading at her cluster.

Time to Read. Elaine was an avid reader and literally read whenever she had a moment. She almost always carried one or two books to different instructional groups and would read when her work was finished. She was in the high Math group and when work was assigned, often sat off to the side by herself, would be one of the first to finish, and would read the book she had been sitting on.

During quiet reading at her cluster, she often looked up if comments such as "read", "get reading" or "get that book open" were directed at anyone near her, and this seemed to reinforce a possible notion that she may have regarded this as approval about ways to look productive and gain positive recognition.

Elaine's apparent view that reading may be a way of winning approval was reinforced in other ways too. One time near the end of the study, the students

in her literature group were all asked to read the same short story. The teacher said,

> "If you finish first, wait until everyone else is done, and we'll talk about it together." Elaine did finish first, looked around at others who were still reading, retrieved the book she was sitting on, looked at the teacher who smiled at her, and then began to read. (Fieldnotes, June 25, 1990)

Knowledge and Authority. Elaine generally seemed to accept the authority of teachers in the school and appeared to work hard for approval of the things she did. A homework club set up in April was optional for Elaine, but she joined anyway and diligently did the work sheets every day.

Elaine was also involved in most of the extra curricular activities and got certificates for being ball monitor, for bulletin board decorating, for doing traffic patrol, and was chosen by the teachers to be Sergeant for the Day later in June.

Elaine was good at coming up with expected ideas, answers, or suggestions. In a discussion on gum chewing, the teacher asked, "What should you do?" Elaine said, "Don't bring it to school", and when a teacher asked how choices for sessions could be made, Elaine suggested, "We could take turns." The teachers readily agreed.

However, she didn't always have the correct response. One day later in the year during a lecture by Mrs. Brown which followed the principal's report that students from this class were pushing year one and two students, Elaine was heard to ask,

> "Well, could you tell him that the little kids should have manners too?"

One teacher said to her, "You guys are supposed to be models of good walking in the halls." Another teacher added, "You students in this block have to improve. End of discussion!" (Fieldnotes, May 8, 1990)

Elaine was seldom seen showing any expressions of resistance toward the teacher's decisions, but one day,

> The children come into the school. Just as Mrs. Massey begins doing attendance, many students are already reading, some are digging for books in their trays. Mrs. Brown, in rushed speech, says, "We don't have time for reading. Quickly move to your Math groups." Elaine, who is reading, looks at Mrs. Brown with her mouth agape, eyes wide, looks at her watch, sighs and rolls her eyes up. She reluctantly puts her book away. (Fieldnotes, May 23, 1990)

Fieldnotes revealed another occasion when Elaine expressed signs of resistance because she may have perceived unfairness in the authority of the teachers. On this occasion after the students had been sitting in the area for 55 minutes through a Math lesson, Mrs. Massey gave them permission to read at their clusters, but quickly changed her mind, saying,

> "No, walk around the room to get your circulation going and meet me back in the area. There are a lot of groans. Elaine looked shocked, rolled her eyes, and shook her head as if in disbelief, "What about reading?" Her question is not answered. Elaine does not look happy. (Fieldnotes, June 12, 1990)

Elaine also seemed to recognize that the teachers knew how to do things best, and she followed their pattern. On one occasion,

Mrs. Scott announces, "Elaine would like to do a book promo presentation." Elaine presents The Three Spirits of Vandemeer Manor by Mary Anderson, following the same pattern, telling what the story was about, a favourite part, and a rating out of 10 that Mrs. Brown had used. (Fieldnotes, June 12, 1990)

Elaine's view of herself in the classroom seemed to be tied to a perceived notion that good students work hard and do what teachers say. She often let them know how well she was doing and would go to extra lengths to impress them. One day, with her library book in her hand, she approached a teacher and asked,

"What do you do if you're finished?" The teacher replied, "You can do either catch up or your reading and writing project." "I'm finished," replied Elaine. "Did you write your good copy?" "No." "Then you can start that." "Okay." She bounces back to her desk and begins writing. She didn't tell the teacher that she was typing her final copy on her computer at home. (Fieldnotes, May 10, 1990)

Just as she did in other school activities, Elaine also worked hard to do her project well. She was the first to complete her plan and didn't mind the trips across the room to where the teacher sat until she got it right and had it initialled. One day after she rambled on excitedly about the story she was going to write, I asked her when she planned to start writing. She said, "As soon as I get this plan right." I asked what she meant. "Well, it has to be right so the teachers will initial it. Then when I do, I can write."

The next day, I noted that Elaine's plan was sitting on the table; it had been

initialled, and she was working on her story. I also noticed she had typed one full page on her computer at home and had handwritten almost another full page.

Elaine seemed proud of the extra book related activities she did at home. She didn't show them all to the teachers but was observed sharing them often with peers at her cluster.

> Elaine announces to her cluster that she is writing a script for a skit. . . . "It's about The Worry Week." She asks for volunteers from her cluster to take part in doing the skit at recess. They all want to be in the play. (Fieldnotes, June 12, 1990)

She also wrote responses almost every day to stories she read and would read them to Sheri.

Sheri

Individual Profile. Sheri was an attractive green eyed girl with thick long hair that was most often in a pony tail and decorated with bright bows or large barrettes. She often wore warm up pants for dance and loose fitting T-shirts. She was frequently observed alone, seeming to be preoccupied with her own thoughts or making the motions of singing and bouncing to her own music.

Peers and Friends. Sheri's chair was next to Elaine's at one end of a cluster of five other girls. Although Sheri was cheerful and friendly to the others, she seemed most settled and task-oriented when Elaine was working or reading alongside her. Sheri liked to talk to Elaine but also respected Elaine's need to move from the cluster to work on her own or to be left alone when she was

working or reading at the cluster. If Elaine left to work elsewhere, Sheri would usually read or do her own work at the cluster.

Sheri didn't talk much with others at the cluster except when working on projects, although she and Elaine talked a lot about books, fashions, babysitting, jazz, and how much accessories such as earrings, bracelets, or barrettes cost. Sheri often took short breaks from reading or working and would wander across the hall to the library, talk on the tape recorder, sharpen her pencil, or look for things in her backpack in the hallway.

> Sheri has left the room. No one seems to notice. Her book, A Swiftly Tilting Planet is open on her table. I found her in the library, looking at books on a revolving carrousel. She saw me and said, "I'm just looking. I just want to see what's here." (Fieldnotes, April 30, 1990)

Sheri was always alert for instructions to go from one grouping to another. She was generally one of the first to line up or join different instructional groups and would save a space for Elaine. She had been placed in the highest Math group, often struggled with the work, was usually one of the last to complete assignments, but never seemed concerned. Sheri always sat beside Elaine during the first part of the Math period which was a teacher-directed lesson. Then when the math work sheets were passed out, Elaine would move to work alone, and Sheri would join someone who worked more at her level. One day she and Debra sat together and giggled about being finished quickly because they had decided to each do alternate questions.

Time to Read. Sheri appeared to enjoy reading, and even when she was

ing other activities, she either had her book open or a large bookmark in it. She read often and frequently stopped reading to write responses. If her journal was not immediately available, she would get a sheet of foolscap from the shelf directly behind her and write on that. Sometimes, she would stop reading to talk on the tape recorder and she referred to this as "responding on the tape." (Transcript, May 19, 1990)

It took Sheri six weeks to read A Swiftly Tilting Planet, and she read it mostly during quiet reading times at school, seldom taking it home. When she finished this book, she read Elaine's babysitter course book and Elaine's copy of The Gigantic Joke Book.

When Sheri arrived in the classroom, she always went directly to her chair, got out her book for quiet reading, would read for a few minutes, and then would leave her book on her desk, do something else briefly, and return to the reading. She did this quietly and didn't talk to others, so it often went unnoticed or at least unquestioned. When given options, Sheri usually chose to read.

> The teacher tells the students to do catch up, read, or complete their projects. Most of the students are working on their projects. Sheri is reading Elaine's babysitter course book. (Fieldnotes, May 3, 1990)

Knowledge and Authority. Sheri seemed to passively accept the authority of the teachers in the classroom. She didn't put a lot of extra effort into complying but liked the rewards. She took part in voluntary extra curricular activities, such as being Phys. Ed equipment monitor, traffic patrolling, and bulletin board decorating, and received some of the same rewards as Elaine. She was cheerful and enthusiastic and with apparent minimum effort, could get positive feedback

from teachers. Sheri was a member of the homework club and though she often lost her sheets, could easily convince teachers the homework was done. In the duration of the study, she often didn't hand homework in but escaped having to take sheets home to do again or staying in to complete them.

Sheri seemed to accept instructions as part of the way school was; she listened and did not question teachers about what she had to do. She only asked questions or made comments when alone with peers, such as when she said, "I don't know why I bother to make a plan sometimes, but then, this one turned out." Then later in the week in a discussion about writing plans with Marta, Sheri said,

> "Well, there's no use because you just sit there and sit there and you can't think of it all at the same time, and then you're supposed to write, and I always go off on a circle from my plan." (Fieldnotes, April 30, 1990)

Though she never complained, she sometimes seemed bored during teacher directed lessons.

> Sheri appears to be listening as she looks around, then back to the teacher, and nods from time to time. Her lips are moving as though she's talking to herself. (Fieldnotes, May 22, 1990)

Sheri seemed to think she could impress others by appearing eager. On different occasions she was observed to express enthusiasm, appear excited, hastily make a choice, then change her mind later. One example occurred during a French lesson on how to do projects when Sheri asked if she could do research about fashions for her project as she bounced and wiggled

enthusiastically. The teacher said that sounded like a good idea, but she should look through resources before making up her mind. Sheri turned to Elaine and excitedly said, "I know what I'm going to do!"

A couple of days later in the same class, the students were shown several resource books on a shelf and told they should look through them and find a topic of major interest to research. The teacher then handed the books out, saying they should trade with each other.

> Sheri opened the book she was handed, saw a picture of cheese, and said, "I'm researching cheese making." She immediately sat down and began writing on her plan sheet. Others were still looking through books and trading with each other. (Fieldnotes, May 16, 1990)

Sheri also took advantage of doing activities she enjoyed. For example she appeared to enjoy having others conference with her, which in this class meant to listen to a story written by someone else and to offer suggestions or ideas. One day Sheri asked me to conference, and when I asked what I should do, she said, "Well, while I read, you can check the spelling and punctuation for me." Elaine, sitting nearby, added, "And the story line." The next day, I overheard Sheri asking Elaine to conference with her and Elaine agreed to. Then on the following day Sheri again asked Elaine, but she said, "You already did with me, remember?" Sheri replied, "Oh yes." Then she shuffled some loose sheets on her table and began writing. (Fieldnotes, May 15 and 16, 1990)

Though she was often reminded to put her things in order, Sheri still spent much of her time digging and searching for things, flattening crumpled sheets, and arranging work to hand in. She often couldn't find her pencil or it needed

sharpening, or she couldn't find sheets of work when she needed them to complete or hand in. However, she always knew where the book she was currently reading was located.

Joseph

Individual Profile. Joseph was a gentle, dark haired, brown-eyed child who came from another country at an early age. He appeared to be easy going, smiled readily, and was always happy. He was quiet and tended to be shy unless he was with someone more outgoing than himself, such as Darwin.

Peers and Friends. Joseph's life at school was oriented to a great extent by his friendships with peers, particulary Darwin. He sat beside Darwin in a cluster of six boys and talked with everyone there, but Darwin was his best friend. They would often say things quietly to each other, and Joseph used Darwin's name and the names of other friends in the project story he was writing. Joseph viewed himself as Darwin's friend and seemed to enjoy being one of the group of six boys who sat at his cluster.

The talk at the cluster covered all kinds of topics and ranged from talking to oneself to everyone being involved in a discussion. Joseph often talked about his work to himself, saying things such as, "now what's happening?" or "now, what's this?"

Joseph's talk about books or work was mainly directed toward Darwin. Sometimes for him Darwin seemed to be the only one who could help, and though he and Darwin had written two stories together earlier in the year, he was careful not to break whatever the current rules about this were.

Joseph isn't writing and is looking around. I ask how it's going. He replies, "I'm at a standstill." Later in the conversation, he says, "Well, I could talk to Darwin . . ." When asked why he didn't talk to Darwin, Joseph said he couldn't because, "There's no collaborative work allowed." (Fieldnotes, May 3, 1990)

When they did Math work sheets, Joseph and Darwin worked together and compared answers. When they chose research projects in French, though they were to do individual projects, they chose the same topic.

I notice Joseph going up to the large sheet and he is writing Fairy Tales beside both his and Darwin's names. They are also sitting together at adjacent corners of a table, sharing resource books. (Fieldnotes, May 17, 1990)

Joseph almost always told Darwin when he finished reading a book, and they talked often about stories they liked.

Joseph says, "I finished this." He shows Darwin a book. Darwin asks, "How was that story?" Joseph replies, "It was great. It was the first book Wilson ever wrote and he did it good." Darwin says, "You should read this Joseph. They're going in the haunted house." (Fieldnotes, May 4, 1990)

Time to Read. Reading times seemed to be valued parts of the day for Joseph. Every day throughout the study, he would take out his book to read as soon as he arrived in the classroom and would take advantage of other opportunities to read.

Joseph is reading. The teacher walks up to him and he says, "I left my

story on the computer at home." The teacher says, "Can't you do your page about yourself?" Joseph replies, "I've already done it. It's on my computer at home." The teacher walks away. He continues to read. (Fieldnotes, May 23, 1990)

Knowledge and Authority. Joseph was quiet, never drew attention to himself, and was very obedient. He always completed his work, seldom asked questions, and only asked for help when there wasn't an alternative. For instance, the children had all been told that only an adult could sew the pages of their books for them. Then one day I observed him approaching a substitute teacher who was in the classroom that day. He said,

"I need this sewed." She looks puzzled and asks, "What do you mean?" Mrs. Brown returns. Joseph stands near her elbow, holding his book. She doesn't ask what he wants, and he doesn't say. Then David came and stood by Joseph. "O.K. what do you guys need?" "I need this sewed." "O.K. Joseph, wait here at the sewing machine." Joseph waited for 10 minutes, leaning against a table, looking around and holding his book. (Fieldnotes, May 25, 1990)

Observation and fieldnotes revealed another time when Joseph sat for 25 minutes, frowning and fidgeting, alternating looking at his plan, and toward the teachers who were all surrounded by children waiting to have their plans initialled. Then,

A teacher comes over, asks Joseph why he's leaning back in his chair, glances over his plan, and initials it. Joseph smiles and goes over to the shelf to get some sheets of paper, returns to his chair, and begins

writing. (Fieldnotes, April 26, 1990)

Often, he and Darwin compared their work. When requested to hand in duotangs, Joseph compared the order of their sheets in their folders, page by page, and then took both his and Darwin's over to give to a teacher.

Joseph always seemed prepared ahead of time to give presentations, even when they hadn't been expected. One day the French teacher asked the group who would be willing to give an overview of their completed project. Joseph did not volunteer, but when she asked him, he said "Sure," then stood up and talked about his project for about five minutes. None of the others were willing to talk about their projects.

Joseph seemed to follow the rules and do his work well. He didn't seem competitive, didn't appear to seek extra challenge, and seemed to prefer being unnoticed. Just as the other key informants, he appeared to enjoy times in the classroom when he could read books of his own personal choice.

Joseph hardly ever offered ideas at large group gatherings and seemed to save his opinions to tell his friend Darwin or share in the safety of his group of friends.

Marta

Individual Profile. Marta, of average height, had straight brown hair cut into a page boy style. She had smallish eyes, a lot of freckles, and a round face. She seldom smiled and often responded curtly and in monosyllables to people she didn't know. She was quiet, serious, and appeared to be shy.

Peers and Friends. Though Marta sat in a cluster with five others, she had

little to do with them except for Lana. It seemed that she was most interested in reading. She generally had one or more books in her hand and seemed to wait for every possible moment to read. Lana was most often reading at the same time. She and Lana went to Saturday school for another language together, and both read in two languages. Lana wasn't as quiet nor as serious as Marta, and if Marta was absent, Lana would talk and laugh with other girls.

Marta often talked about her good friends, Shelley and Linda, and though she was seldom seen with them and they appeared to have little in common, she seemed drawn to their bubbly personalities. When with them, Marta would look less serious, would laugh, and would appear more physically energized.

Marta considered one of her friends, Linda, to be a source of advice about books to read. When asked how she chose books, she said she would ask Linda because she could probably pick a good one.

Marta and Lana were in every group together, would always sit side by side, would work hard, and produce high quality work. They also shared resources. One day Marta and Lana were sitting side by side working on a project. Marta showed Lana a book she was using for research, "See, I've got a biography, The Life of Picasso. You can look at it too." "O.K."

Marta always made a special effort to make sure Lana would be sitting by her. One day the teachers told the students to go to the area.

> Marta goes. She is patting the floor by her side with her hand, signalling with the other hand for Lana to sit there. . . . The teacher notices, "No saving spots!" Marta stops signalling. Lana moves in and sits by Marta. (Fieldnotes, April 27, 1990)

Time to Read. Marta read almost constantly, and during the study Lana always read alongside her. Marta preferred to stay in at recess to read, would ask Lana to stay with her, and if she had to go out, would take her book and ask Lana to do the same. One day Marta asked if she could stay in to read at noon. When she was told "yes," she turned to Lana and asked, "Do you want to read too?" Lana said "yes!" Marta also cheered silently whenever indoor recesses were announced.

Marta's sense of organization and neatness worked to her advantage in allowing extra time to read. At one point early in the study, the students were asked to put their duotangs on the Greek Study in order and turn them in for marking. Many students were struggling to get the sheets in order, to find the sheets they needed, and some were arguing about what belonged and what didn't. Marta's duotang was sitting neatly on her table in front of her, and she was reading.

Marta stole moments to read whenever she could, talked her way into staying in to read, and often she and Lana would read the same story and talk about it or write responses. One day the students were told to do quiet reading, and Marta said she had nothing to read but the students were not allowed to exchange books at the library.

> She asked Lana, "Lana, are you finished?" "Almost." Then Marta said, "I have an idea. I'll write a response and you read it, and you write a response to me and I'll read it." They both write. (Fieldnotes, June 13, 1990)

Knowledge and Authority. The teachers said Marta was bright and that she

usually did a good job in her work. However, Marta seemed to feel she wasn't challenged at school and often said she had done the work before in grade two or three. However, she attributed having to do it again to curriculum expectations. One day during an informal conversation with the researcher, she said, "I did this before in Grade three." "Why do you think you have to it again?" Marta replied,

> "I guess it's the curriculum. That's why we have to do that stuff. The teachers tell us that the things we do we have to 'cause it's in the curriculum." When asked what the curriculum was, she replied "Well, it's a book that tells you what you have to learn." (Fieldnotes, May 16, 1990)

Marta tried to let the teachers know that the work was too easy. One day after being given a photocopied sheet of story characters and a blank sheet with instructions to cut out characters, glue them on the blank sheet, and make up a conversation between them, Lana said, "This is like an Art activity. It's too easy." The teacher said, "No, this will be fun. You can write whatever you like. Just try it." Marta did the activity, did not put much effort into it, and looked disinterested and unhappy. She read her book as soon as she completed the activity.

Marta appeared to enjoy making her own choices and for her project, she chose poems and was eager to write them. Her plan consisted of a list of poems she would write, but she appeared to struggle with a title suggested by a teacher for her book, and when her project was finished, she had changed the title from Themes: Nature Seasons to Four Seasons. She had attempted to organize the poems she had written into seasons, and though many did not suit a season

theme, she included them anyway.

Also, near the completion of her project, Marta asked if she and Lana could have a conference about their poetry on the tape recorder. The teacher said, "For a couple of minutes." Then the teacher announced that project time was over. Marta and Lana stayed at the tape recorder and carried on with their conference. No one said anything to them and after 15 minutes, they joined the other groups. No one questioned where they had been or what they had been doing.

Marta did not appear to enjoy the long lecture-like lessons and on three occasions was heard saying to Lana, "we hardly got to read", "I wish we could read", and "why can't we read?" Her behaviour during these lessons reflected her disinterest as she looked around a lot, nodded, and yawned.

Though Marta mostly kept to herself and worked hard, it was observed that things sometimes seemed unfair to her. For example,

> Marta, illustrating her book of poetry, is arguing with Adam about whose feet go where under the table. Mrs. Brown says, "Marta move over there and finish your work." Marta rolls her eyes and moves. (Fieldnotes, May 24, 1990)

Marta seemed to view herself as different from others in the class and appeared to draw Lana in as her companion. She liked to share the poems she wrote with others and appeared to be proud of them. She wrote one about each of her three friends, Lana, Shelley, and Linda.

Darwin

Individual Profile. Darwin, of average height and sturdily built, was blond haired and blue eyed. His hair, often looking wet and combed into a side-parted style, seemed difficult to manage. Early in the study, he got his hair cut into a brush cut, but by the end it was again looking unruly. Darwin generally wore loose fitting T-shirts and brightly coloured shorts or jogging pants. Darwin smiled easily and had a good sense of humour. He seemed to take pride in being positive.

Peers and Friends. Darwin's peers were an important part of his life at school. He seemed to like everyone but was best friends with Joseph. He talked mainly with Joseph about books he read, and both he and Joseph seemed to be aware of what the other was reading or had finished reading. Darwin was often observed taking an active part in talk which varied widely in topics at his cluster.

Sometimes two or three topics would be discussed at the cluster at once, and sometimes each person would be talking to no one in particular and responding to whoever's comments were heard at the moment. Sometimes the whole group participated in talk that went from topic to topic, but whatever the talk was about, Darwin could be heard making comments.

Darwin always worked with Joseph at instructional groupings and compared assigned work and projects. Darwin had a good sense of humour and with his outgoing, talkative ways, seemed to enjoy the calmness about Joseph. They appeared to consider themselves a good team and were observed cuing each other with glances when either seemed to have reason to believe it was time to

work or be quiet. They completed projects at the same time and read together.

Time to Read. Darwin never missed an opportunity to do quiet reading. He would rush to his chair on arrival, barely complete assigned worksheets or other tasks, and would take breaks from his project work. He always had a reserve of three or four books in his drawer and read one at a time, often looking at the covers of the others.

Darwin hardly ever got permission to stay in to read at recess, and one day the researcher could see that he really wanted to stay in to read during noon recess and volunteered to stay in the classroom so he could. He read intently the whole time, responding out loud with such comments as "I was right", "oh, no", and "oh, great." He was also often heard responding in loud whispers as he read during class time and appeared to be trying to read as fast as he could.

> Darwin is bent over his book as he holds it open on the table in front of him. It seems from his facial expression that he may be trying to read more quickly. He bobs his head now and then and looks as though he's talking. The teacher begins giving instructions. Darwin keeps reading. She tells him to put the book away. He does. (Fieldnotes, May 15, 1990)

Darwin stole every moment to read that he could and when given the option of working on his project or reading, always chose to read. He read 36 books during the study and made many trips to the school library for new books. Most of the books he read were mysteries, others were stories about characters his own age.

Knowledge and Authority. Darwin respected the authority of teachers about the knowledge to be learned and always seemed confident in putting his

hand up to offer ideas, although his input seemed to wane as lessons went on. During one teacher-directed lesson, students were asked to brainstorm ideas for illustrations projected onto a screen from an overhead. At the beginning his hand was up constantly; then after 30 minutes, he seemed to lose interest and said to Joseph, "At first it was fun, now it's gotten kind of boring."

Darwin seemed to want to be seen as a well-behaved, responsible student. One day near the end of the study, I noticed a small folded paper being passed around. It was passed to Darwin. Darwin glanced at it, looked at me, and said, "Obscene message, I'll tear it up." Then he tore it into tiny bits.

Darwin's intentions at the beginning of June of reading another 25 books before the end of June so he could fill another sheet were high, and when Cameron suggested comics, Darwin maintained he would still do it by reading books. He actually did read 16 books before the last day of school in June.

Darwin was regarded by the teachers as one of the best students in the class. He was in the homework club, always did his homework, and got rewarded for ball monitoring and bulletin board decorating. He also played for the school softball and soccer teams. He seemed to watch and listen for cues about what to do next, and was seldom seen being reminded about putting his reading book away or doing work over to meet teacher set standards.

Darwin was voted, through secret ballots by the students, to represent the sixth graders at their graduation ceremony. After the voting was completed, Darwin was surprised to find he would have to read a speech at the ceremony. However, he accepted the honour graciously, was modest, smiled, and said, "Yeah, sure, I'll do that." This modest, cheerful manner seemed to help make

him popular with the other children.

Darwin appeared aware that he was a good student in the eyes of his teachers. He always had a smile for them, they smiled back, and he seemed to know that being a good student had payoffs. He could get away with teasing the teachers and in this way seemed to express resistance against the things he felt were unfair. One time when students were asked to find 10 pieces of garbage on the floor and turn it in to gain permission to be dismissed, Darwin and Joseph, with their backs to the teacher, took paper from the garbage can, tore it into bits, and gave it to the teacher. She dismissed them. Later in the hall, Darwin laughed, saying, "We got her, but she knew."

Darwin only complained about school with his friends. Once at recess as Darwin, Cameron, Joseph, and David discussed school, Darwin's contribution to the discussion was, "The lessons are boring."

Darwin's view of school appeared to be one of passive acceptance. He seemed to respect the teacher's authority, followed the rules, and was pleasant to to everyone. However, he also seemed to know he could make more time to read by completing assignments and projects as quickly as possible.

## The Children and Their Home Contexts

Each of the six children's parents were invited to separate interviews about their child's reading in the home. In all cases, the parents said because of work and other commitments, only one parent could be there. This description of the children is written from the researcher's interpretation of parent comments made during the interview to provide a view of each child as a reader in the home as

seen through the eyes of the parents.

Cameron

Cameron was almost two years younger than his sister and had lived with his family in another country until two years before the study. His mother had not worked outside the home, and his father had always travelled extensively in his job until they moved to Canada.

Cameron's mother believed Cameron's interest in books began when he was very young and during a time when the family lived in a remote area with no television available. Because she was home alone with Cameron and his sister, she spent a lot of time with them mainly involved in reading, singing, and making up skits to go with stories and songs. Up until two years ago, both she and her husband read to Cameron at bedtime. Now he reads for at least one-half hour himself before falling asleep. She said, "It has become a ritual to read a book before sleeping."

She expressed concern over Cameron's enjoyment of Stephen King books but seemed to see it as a possible phase that children his age go through. She said,

> "When he first heard about these books from his sister who heard about them at her school, he was quite interested in this gory stuff, and he right away told his friend David, and David got excited too. I guess then he was inspired to look further into them. Him and David used to go in a corner in the basement and read them with a flashlight. He has quite a few on his book shelf, but I think the phase will pass, and

in fact I've seen him with other author's books." (Interview, Cameron's mother, June 8, 1990)

Cameron's mother also seemed to believe that by not watching television, Cameron had time to develop an interest in building radio controlled cars which involved reading technical language that she said she didn't understand.

"Television really only came into being at our house in the last four or five years, because Cameron was starting to come home saying, "the teacher said they had to watch this and this program, and that's about when we started to introduce T.V. and they had to be closely supervised." (Interview, Cameron's mother, June 8, 1990)

From her point of view, Cameron enjoyed talking mainly with her about the stories he read, and she was impressed at his ability to express his ideas and relate his own experiences to the books he read. She attributed this to the encouragement she and her husband gave their children about being open and honest when talking about their feelings and about experiences in their lives.

Elaine

Elaine, the oldest of four sisters, had always lived in the same area of the city. She attended the same school since grade one and rode on one of the school buses to get there. Her mother, a homemaker, had not worked in a job outside the home since Elaine was born.

Elaine's mother said Elaine was "quite a reader" and would usually read two or more books at a time at home, alternating from one to the other. She felt that Elaine resented chores and other things that interfered with her time to

read. "Things cut into her reading at home. When she is reading, if she has chores to do, it's begrudgingly that she will set a book down." (Interview, June 6, 1990)

She had also noticed that Elaine alternated between very light reading such as Archie comics and novels when she was in Grade three, but now, two years later, she has seen Elaine reading mainly mystery stories. She attributed Elaine's occasional reading of Babysitter Club books to her desire to earn money by babysitting.

She also reported that Elaine began to read at age five, and said that Elaine's enthusiasm about reading was not only because of her and her husband's interest in books but because of the things they did that made Elaine think about the story more. Up until a year ago, they read to Elaine every night, would pause when reading to ask questions, and encouraged her to also ask questions and talk about the story. She said,

> "You know, I think the talking we do sets the tone. You know, we haven't just read something, like while we read she has learned to think about the story, like there's a reason for such and such, and what is it? and why do you think this happened? and so on. I think the talk we do helps her thinking about the story to become almost automatic." (Interview, Elaine's mother, June 6, 1990)

She also said she and Elaine talk about stories together and she has noticed Elaine initiate talk about stories with her friends.

Elaine's mother seemed to feel strongly that reading at home should supplement reading at school and believed children must be encouraged to read,

talk about stories, tell stories, and write stories at home as well as at school.

> "You know, I think at home you should encourage them to talk about what they've read or written, then I think it also provides more incentive to produce at school to show at home, and to produce at home to show at school." (Interview, Elaine's mother, June 6, 1990)

She also credited their travel, camping, and people they've met with building a background of experiences that Elaine could draw on. She said,

> "Sometimes she will think back about what we've done or someone she's met, and I'm sure that helps her understand incidents. I don't know if it just comes to mind for her, but it's there, and it must make a difference." (Interview, Elaine's mother, June 6, 1990)

Sheri

Sheri, the oldest of three children, had two brothers, who were five and six years younger than she. Sheri's father was a university student until Sheri was six, and her mother had worked in a full time job outside the home.

Sheri's father said he began to read to her when she was only one month old and believed that was when she began to enjoy books. He expressed a lot of enjoyment for the times he spent reading stories to her and talking with her about these stories. He said he probably spent more time at this than a lot of people because he enjoyed it, and also said maybe he compensated for the fact that this was something his wife preferred not to do. Though he hadn't read to Sheri for over a year, he said he and Sheri took turns reading to her younger brother.

He also expressed particular interest in the time he and Sheri spent talking about the fantasy stories she read. He said he believed the quality of their discussions began to develop when he volunteered in her daycare and kindergarten programs. After each of these times, they would talk about experiences there, activities they were both involved in, and stories, films, or songs.

He expressed awareness that in the last year Sheri seemed to alternate in her reading between "indepth books and light reading." He could see her reluctance about chores and attributed this to her interest in reading. He believed their discussions about books contributed to her high interest in reading. He pointed out that many of the discussions they had took place when they had breakfast as they were both up first in their house, and this had been going on for many years.

Another activity Sheri's father talked about was taking Sheri and her brother to the community library almost every Saturday. He said when they went, they would usually spend about an hour there, "just looking around at everything."

Sheri's father seemed to particularly enjoy the times he spent with her and regarded these as influences on her interests in reading. He said,

> "Sometimes Sheri and I both sit and read, and her mother does too. Then other times, and these are what's important, then we both talk about our books. Like, I talk about what I'm reading too, and we both get our chance. Sometimes we work on her research, like look up things in the encyclopedia. Some people I know watch T.V. together, but because

I was a student we couldn't afford one, or maybe we really didn't want one. Anyway, I really think she prefers to read, and that's fine with us." (Interview, Sheri's father, June 11, 1990)

Joseph

Joseph, the second oldest of five children, moved to Canada with his family when he was five. His parents had both gone to university in Canada and then operated a large business in their home country. They arranged for their children to take their early years of schooling in Canada. This meant that from when Joseph was five until he was eight, his mother divided her time between being with the children here and assisting with the business there. Joseph's grandmother was the primary caregiver during the months when his mother was away. The whole family has recently returned to their home country.

Joseph's mother recalled that he had been interested in books from about the age of three. The long hours she put in at a factory left little time for her to read to her children, but her younger teenaged sister, who lived with them, read to them because it helped her to learn English.

Joseph's mother also said he was a very quiet child and would spend hour after hour looking at books. She didn't like the children to watch television and said she valued them playing with others. She found Joseph would often have to be forced to go out to play because he wanted to be with his books.

"He goes in his room and closes the door and hangs up his 'do not disturb' sign, and the rest stay out, and he reads or works on his computer. Sometimes Darwin comes to visit him. I don't know what they do, but

they go in his room." (Interview, Joseph's mother, June 14, 1990)

She said now that he's older he still reads a lot, but she had wanted him to read more classic stories such as Huckleberry Finn. However, now that she doesn't work she pointed out that she has more time to talk with him about his books. Her interest in why he was so fascinated with mystery stories finally got her to read one recently, and she said she had to admit she enjoyed it. They talked about the story, and she said he was very happy she liked it. Now she doesn't worry so much that he should read classics.

Marta

Marta was the oldest of two girls close in age. They lived with their mother who worked full time. Their father lived in another city and Marta spent time with him during school holidays.

Marta's mother said she began to read to Marta when she was as young as two months old, and that Marta could read simple words such as 'cat' when she was three years old. She said she wanted Marta to be a good reader and thought she could help by reading to her and teaching her to read as she wasn't working at the time. Her husband was studying and she had lots of time. She admitted that she is now concerned that maybe Marta reads too much.

"That's all she thinks about right now, and I don't know if that's good. I think maybe her Math is being neglected, but the teachers say she is doing well, but then what about other things? I don't know what to say because I can't find other reasons for her not to read, but she seems so obsessed with it and keeps getting more and more." (Interview,

Marta's mother, June 13, 1990)

She said that Marta reads in the car and sometimes through dinner, and this means there is hardly any time to talk with her about anything.

Marta's mother also seemed overwhelmed at Marta's general interest in accumulating books. When her father sent her money, she only wanted to go to book stores. She said Marta read in two languages and read poetry books, science fiction, mystery, and the Tolkien books.

She believed that though she and Marta talked about books and stories when Marta was younger, peers seem to be more important to her now. She has noticed that Marta now talks mainly with her friend Lana, and they spend hours on the phone. She has overheard Marta reading to Lana on the phone, talking about stories and comparing homework.

Darwin

Darwin, the middle child of three children each two years apart, had an older brother and a younger handicapped sister. His mother recently returned to full time work outside the home.

Darwin's mother said Darwin had been interested in books since he was about two. She said that even as a young child, Darwin had impressed her with the amount of time he could spend on looking at one book.

She said Darwin was a very kind person who liked to do things for others, and this extended into his caring about others' reading. Sometimes when he went to the library, he would bring books for others in the family and would

often read to his younger sister.

Darwin's mother attributed some of his enjoyment for reading to the fact that the family seldom watched television, and everyone read a lot. She said Darwin most often read in a room where he was alone and indicated that because Darwin preferred such quiet areas to read at home, reading at school must be difficult for him.

Her view was that Darwin liked to talk with her about the stories he read, and they would have lengthy discussions while the two of them were alone preparing dinner, driving somewhere, or if everyone else in the family was out. A term she used to describe Darwin as a reader was "interactive." She said she couldn't explain what she meant but that she saw him as interacting directly with the story without making judgements and viewed this ability as a gift. Her view of reading in their home was expressed in these comments,

> "We are all readers and that's a recreation for us. You know I think overall, we haven't read to the kids because we think it's a good thing to do. We've read because we like to. The kinds of books I've chosen to read myself are the kinds I can talk about with the kids." (Interview, Darwin's mother, May 31, 1990)

In summary, all of the parents expressed awareness of their children being interested in books from an early age. They all seemed to believe the things they did such as reading and talking about books helped to develop their child's interest in reading.

All six parents also seemed to encourage their children to talk about the

books they read, and there wasn't any indication, except for one, that they directed the talk in any way. The one parent, however, seemed to feel it was important to direct the talk when reading to her child. Her view was that it was important to teach her children how to think about the story, and this could be achieved through asking questions. This parent also seemed to feel that reading and writing activities at home should supplement those at school.

## Discussion of Context and Children's Experiences

The context of the children's classroom was shaped by social interactions that occured within it. Mehan (1979) contends that children in a classroom must be engaged in active interpretive work in that setting in order to achieve expectations of themselves and others as successful participants, both academically and socially. Consistent with Apple (1990) and Sharp's (1980) views, it appeared that children's and teachers' ideologies of the classroom as a learning environment formed the basis for explicit and implicit messages of power, submission, and quality of learning that were presented through classroom routines, lessons, sanctions, and reprimands. Key phrases such as, "do quiet reading", "go to the area" or "work in your cluster" used by the teachers conveyed many implicit rules to the children about being quiet and being busy. This recognition relates to Meyer's (1977) view that beliefs and values about what happens at school give justification to the teacher as authority. It appeared, however that when the organization and teachings did not match children's values, they sometimes actively reinterpreted the situation so there was a closer match between their own values and the activity. For example, Cameron chose

to read Stephen King books during quiet reading even though he seemed aware of teachers preferences for him to read books such as The Hobbit. Resistance aimed at unequal relations of power (Giroux, 1983) was also evident. For example, Elaine and Marta on two separate occasions, seemed to express frustration about being powerless by rolling their eyes up and looking exasperated.

The classroom also reflected many tacit ways in which the children's knowledge was constructed outside that planned by teachers. Consistent with McLaren (1989) and Willis' (1977) findings that students look for ways to make school personally meaningful, when the children in this study were working on assigned tasks at clusters for example, talk between them often covered various topics and issues unrelated to the task at hand such as skateboards, television, interest in the opposite sex, shoe sizes, and fashions.

Interviews with parents revealed that the contexts of the children's homes were also shaped by the social interactions within them. The home as a reading environment was influenced by the support that parents in this study gave their children toward reading and discussing the books they read. These parents all seemed to attribute their children's interest in books to the reading and talking about books that they believed occured in their home. For instance, Darwin's mother said she read many of the same books as Darwin and she thought this sparked conversations about books and stories between them. Cameron's mother said she did not approve of the Stephen King books Cameron read, but viewed his reading of them as a stage that he would pass through, and believed that on his own he was now choosing other books to read.

Extensive fieldnotes revealed that the classroom context for these children was shaped mainly through the teachers' organization of groups, time, and content. The children in this classroom were members of various small and large, heterogeneous and homogeneous, single and mixed gender groups, each of which had established routines that directed and controlled the group as well as each individual in it. Sometimes the class was randomly divided into smaller heterogeneous groups for teaching. Other times, as in Math, homogeneous groupings were based on abilities that seemed to be determined through teacher testing and observations. Cluster groupings consisted of children of different ages, some clusters consisted of girls, others of boys, and some of mixed gender. The children in this classroom moved in groups, sat in groups, were taught in groups, and were often praised and reprimanded as groups.

As an individual in a group, each child had to take turns, share materials, wait for others, and often compromise personal preferences and ideas. According to Jackson (1983), though children work in groups in school they also have to learn how to be isolated in crowds, learn to "suffer in silence" (p.33), and accept "continued delay, denial and interruption of their personal wishes and desires" (p. 34). Having one or more friends or compatible peers in their groups seemed to be valued by the children. For example, one day Marta hurrried to the large group area, sat down, and patted the floor beside herself as she signalled to Lana to sit beside her. On another occasion during a reorganization of the classroom, Cameron and his friends ended up back at the same cluster they had been separated from earlier. Cameron said, "Be quiet so they don't move us," and they all got out their books and read quietly. Consistent with

Musgrave's (1988) view of the importance of peer support, underlying the value of having friends or compatible peers nearby was the support, understanding, and tolerance that children who shared similar experiences in this classroom seemed to give to each other. Darwin and Joseph for example, were often seen glancing at each other as though they were giving each other support or cues about getting to work or being quiet.

One group, referred to as the large group, often met at the area for lecture-type lessons. The routines and practices underlying these lessons seemed to be accepted by the children as the way school was in this classroom. Teacher's ideologies about school also gave legitimacy to these teacher-directed lectures as a way of conveying the knowledge they seemed to believe needed to be learned by the children. The beliefs, values, and feelings, or ideologies these teachers and children appeared to have about learning and teaching, is supported by Apple (1990) and Giroux (1981) who agree with Sharp (1980) who says, "before any teaching takes place at all we are taught what to be taught entails" (p. 124). The children's behaviour in the group reflected awareness that compliance such as being quiet, nodding, waiting to speak, and expressing teacher views was sanctioned. It appeared from the children's reactions to teachers comments or disapproving expressions that they were aware that forms of behaviors such as talking loudly, yawning loudly, playing with things, talking out of turn, and questioning authority were not sanctioned. For example, one time when the children talked loudly on their way to the area they were told to return to their chairs and put their heads down on their desks for five minutes. When later told to go to the area they did so very quietly.

The cluster group, an arrangement of five or six desks, where the children went when they arrived, where they read, and often where they worked seemed to reflect a comfortable place for them to be, and where it seemed that talk about things that interested them would often be ignored by teachers. For example, Cameron, Joseph, David, Darwin, and Tak often talked about movies, stories, skateboards, and other things that interested them while they worked. Talk at clusters consisted of sharing interests, ideas, and concerns sometimes with one other person and sometimes with four or five others. Marta, for instance, expressed her concerns with Laura about having time to read, and Darwin expressed his feelings of boredom toward lessons with Joseph. Sheri and Elaine shared many ideas concerning their interests in fashions, babysitting, and jazz dancing. Cameron shared his reasons for liking Stephen King books with David. These kinds of relations were created through ideal speech situations of equal rights to talk, to question, and to discuss (Gidden, 1977; Habermas, 1979) and formed the basis of the children's interactions with each other about stories they were reading, personal experiences, and interests.

Quiet reading time was valued, and friends and peers who sat together in a cluster seemed to generally support each other's interests in reading. The children at the clusters often talked about stories they read and liked or disliked, lent and borrowed books, and seemed to respect each other's desires for uninterrupted quiet time in which to read. For example, one day Cameron said, "S-h-h," as he was reading and others at his cluster stopped talking and worked quietly.

The context of the classroom was also shaped by the structure of time.

Bates (1982) suggests that the organization of time in a classroom "emphasizes and demands certain kinds of relationships between teachers and pupils" (p. 15). Children's perceptions of urgency in getting things done to levels accepted as quality from the teachers' points of view and to their own levels of quality seemed to be influenced by explicit instructions that preceded each stage of project completion. Anyon (1980) and Bates (1982) draw attention to the possibility that from the children's perspective the classroom may have been viewed as a workshop in which time, content, and structure are fixed by others. Time limits set for completion and quality monitored by teachers who initialed children's work in each stage of production seemed to create time pressures. Teacher's assistance in final completion to levels of quality they set and within certain time frames also seemed to add to the pressures that permeated the room. The urgency to complete assigned work and projects and to produce quality appeared to be constructed by, and a construction of, teacher and student ideologies about school and their perceptions about the use of time. It seemed that shortages of time did not allow for teacher's diversions from helping children acquire legitimate knowledge and produce quality. Bates (1982) contends that the organization of time "shapes the consciousness of individuals" (p. 18) through the way it structures activities in the classroom. For example, in the typical day, comments from teachers such as "meet me in the area quickly" and "we've already lost five minutes of our time" preceded the lesson to be taught. Comments such as "O.K. now you have 15 minutes to work on your plan" and "no time to waste" often preceded tasks children were assigned. The teachers also seemed rushed when initialing completed work because the

children usually finished at about the same time.

For the children, time seemed scarce in which they could read, discuss stories, or relate personal experiences and interests. They usually went directly to their clusters to read and often talked about other books they were reading and other personal interests with others when working at their clusters, walking to the area, or at recess. Elaine and Marta almost always took books they were presently reading wherever they went, would sit on them during teacher-directed lessons, and would usually read them if they had to wait. One day the children in the teacher-directed group were instructed to read a short story to themselves and were told to wait if they finished before the others. Elaine finished her reading early then read the book she had been sitting on during the lesson.

The children seemed to have an implicit awareness that power and submission were the underlying reasons for not enough time to read. Their awareness that classroom routines, schedules, and work to be completed may be taking time from their reading seemed to be reflected in their expressions of resistance when they put a minimum of effort and time into tasks and projects or stole time in other ways so they could read. For example, Darwin, who seemed to hurry to do his assignment on quotations and then read a book was told to put the book away and correct the spelling on his assignment. On more than one occasion Cameron missed instructions about lining up because he was reading. It also appeared that Cameron may have chosen to make comics for his book-making project because it would allow him time for diversions from it. For example, he seemed to take breaks often to read and talked with peers almost constantly as he worked at illustrating his comics. This notion is

supported by McLaren (1989) who contends that this kind of resistance gives the student power over having "pleasure" (p. 188).

The context of the classroom also seemed to be shaped by the knowledge teachers regarded as important. Consistent with a structuralist view (Culler, 1975), the teacher was central in attempting to equip the children with linguistic and literary knowledge through instruction and guided learning. For example, a literature unit in May and June involved children in reading stories selected by teachers. After each story, the teacher directed the children as they practiced developing factual, interpretive, and evaluative questions from the story. Teacher-directed lessons also focused on how metaphors, similes, and personification were used to express ideas in stories. These teacher-directed lessons parallel Reid's (1984) view that in a gallery approach to reading, meaning comes from someone outside the reader who has expertise the reader must imitate. The content of teacher-directed lessons, individual assignments, teacher initials before proceeding, and teacher's responses to children's response journals seemed to help reassure teachers that students were learning appropriate information. When the teachers no longer responded to children's response journals they did not ask to see them even though many of the children continued to write in them.

Children's differentiation between legitimate knowledge determined and presented by teachers and personal knowledge about their own interests and social relations seemed to have an influence on the level of their personal involvement in assigned tasks and projects. For example, one day Marta told the teacher she felt the activity on quotations was too easy. When the teacher said

it would be fun and she should do it, Marta completed the activity, looked unhappy, and didn't seem to put much interest in it. Then, another day when Marta and Lana asked for permission to have a conference on the tape recorder about the poetry they were writing for their project, the teacher said they could "for a couple of minutes." However, they taped their discussion about the poetry for 15 minutes and appeared to enjoy doing it. When they returned to the group, the teacher didn't ask about their taping and they didn't volunteer to talk about it with her. Musgrave (1988) contends that children accept knowledge presented by teachers as "what they should know to succeed in the present social system" (p.65). Apple (1990) agrees that what is considered legitimate knowledge depends on the beliefs, values, and feelings of those involved about learning and school and the idea that "content construed as school knowledge is evidence of their perceived legitimacy" (p.45). The children seemed to accept that teachers knew which knowledge must be taught and that the teacher's job was to teach it. Marta, for instance, reasoned that teachers got this knowledge from the "curriculum . . . . a book that tells you what you have to learn." Explicit and implicit messages about lines of authority, whose knowledge was most important, and power and submission in relations between individuals in the classroom came through teacher directed-lessons as well as during the children's completion of assignments. For example, the children needed to have teacher initials of approval on each stage of their work in the book-making project, and would wait in line or at their chairs for these initials before they would proceed to the next stage. This notion of quality of product also parallels Reid's (1984) view that in a gallery approach someone other than the student

has the expertise.

Apple (1990), Fay (1989), and Giroux and Purpel's (1983) argument that schools should consider the personal knowledge of children and their present and past lived experiences to construct meaningful endeavours relates to Elaine's experiences. One day she spent most of a one hour period working on her plan for writing a story. She made several trips across the room to the teacher until the teacher initialed it. Then she put it into her desk tray and read her library book. On the other hand, several days before that, she had written a script for The Worry Week at home and had brought it to school. She had not shared it with teachers but shared it with peers at her cluster and asked for volunteers among them to play roles in the skit at recess. All five peers at her cluster eagerly volunteered.

The children's interpretation of social interactions in this classroom were influenced both by teacher's authority over the organization of groups and content and by their own beliefs and values. It appears that the children's interpretation of social interaction in this classroom varied according to whether they or the teacher had authority in a particular setting. For example, the teacher's authority over the content of the knowledge to be learned was demonstrated in teacher-directed lessons and assigned tasks. The children's authority appeared to be demonstrated when they used their own personal knowledge as they discussed topics and issues of current interest to them with their peers at their clusters. In chapter II Fish's (1980) notion of interpretive communities was presented. From Fish's (1980) belief that membership in an interpretive community arises out of a world that is shared, it can be inferred

that the children in this study were members of various interpretive communities. For example, their membership in the interpretive communities of their homes provided them with certain shared perspectives from which they read and responded to literature. In the context of this classroom, the children appeared to be members of interpretive communities that were directed by teachers and interpretive communities that were directed by themselves. Results in the next chapter provide a view of the children's definitions of response and their responses to literature from the perspectives of their membership in interpretive communities in which teachers had authority in directing children's responses and in interpretive communities in which children had authority in directing their own responses.

# CHAPTER V

# THE NATURE OF CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

## Introduction

The purpose of this study, to explore the nature of children's responses to literature in the context of one classroom, was wide in focus. It was hypothesized that the children's responses may be influenced by their membership in various interpretive communities within the context of the classroom. Following data collection, analysis of data revealed definite trends regarding the kinds of responses each child made in different interpretive communities within the context of the classroom.

This chapter presents the children's definitions of response, followed by two different perspectives from which each child's responses in the classroom can be viewed. Responses made by children when teachers responded to their responses and when direct teaching preceded their responses are presented under the classification of teacher's authority. Responses made by children when they directed their own responses and when they shared their responses with peers are presented under the classification of children's authority.

## Children's Definition of Response

Separate interviews were conducted with the children individually on different occasions throughout the study in which they were asked to discuss their definition of response to literature. The following section provides a view

of each of their definitions of response.

Cameron

Cameron's view of responding to literature included conveying honest feelings and thoughts about a book or story.

> "Like if you read a book you can be really open in your response about how you feel about it. You shouldn't lie, and if you really hate the book, you shouldn't say that it's good. You have to say why you think it is or isn't good for you." (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

It was his view that both personal experiences and books could be responded to and that his responses were unique representations of his own thoughts and feelings.

> "Your thoughts can't always be good or bad . . . . there are images in my mind and what I think is different or could be different than someone else. Like, I might think about more emotional things because I tend to like books that have emotions." (Transcript, April 27, 1990)

In an informal conversation with the researcher, Cameron said any book that was read could be responded to, though alleged he had never seen responses about information books.

In Cameron's view, school provided him with opportunities to learn how to respond by giving him ideas for wording his responses. However, he seemed to think he learned how to respond himself through the practice he got by expressing his feelings when he discussed stories he was reading with peers. When asked by the researcher how these discussions helped, he said,

"Well, it helps you think of something. Like you might of not thought of it. If you have a discussion, then the other person brings up what you were thinking about before, and you can get more ideas or it can trigger up ideas," (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

Elaine

Elaine defined responses as expressions of feelings and thoughts about the books or stories she was reading.

"Well I guess to me response is when I talk about what I'm thinking and feeling about things. Say, if I'm responding about a story, it would be my feelings like about the things that happen, and what I think about what happens or the characters like in the story." (Transcript, May 22, 1990)

She also contended that responses were not limited to books, but could be made to "almost anything". In her view, responses could only be made to books that had story lines.

"Well, you can respond to any kind of book except the kind like Spot. You couldn't really respond to that 'cause it's only for learning to read. There's no story line to it." (Transcript, May 22, 1990)

She also believed she learned to make responses from teachers because "they expect me to do responses and that helps me know how". (Transcript, May 22, 1990)

Elaine's belief that feelings were an important aspect of writing responses was reflected in her view that she could make better responses by talking with others. In a conversation with Sheri, she said,

"That's right, sometimes you can't get your feelings into words by yourself. It's just easier if you can talk about it. I know I can get my feelings out better by talking about it." (Transcript, May 22, 1990)

Sheri

Sheri defined response as talking and writing about feelings, likes, dislikes, and thoughts she had while she read.

"Like give your feelings about a story when you talk or write. Also I write about how I like people and things or if I hate them or just not like them. I have all kinds of thoughts to respond about then I'm reading." (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

Her responses however, were not limited to reading. She said,

"You can respond to all kinds of books, and if you went to a play, you could to that, or if you go some place like, maybe a trip or shopping or something, you can respond to that."(Transcript, May 22, 1990)

Sheri, however, expressed confusion over her views of response as an expression of feelings, and the messages she got from teachers. She said, "Like if I say I feel sad about this or that, then they say, 'Don't tell me the story all over again." (Transcript, May 15, 1990)

Her reasons for enjoying verbal responses reflected her view that responding meant giving her own thoughts and ideas about stories, and she could do this best by talking.

"I like talking best. I guess it really depends on the book. Like if

I really get a feeling for the book I like to talk about it, I like to tell someone like Elaine what's happening in the story. Then I like to hear other people's opinions too."(Transcript, June 5, 1990)

Sheri said she learned how to do responses by talking about stories she read from an early age, particularly with her father.

Joseph

Joseph's definition of response was closely tied to his personal reactions toward different kinds of books and his intrigue with stories.

"Well, a response is how you react or feel about a book. Like when I do a response about a book, I sort of tell my own feelings about the book, and my ideas about what I thought about the story, or what happened, or what could of happened." (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

He also believed responses could be made about any experience and about any kind of book.

"It can be about almost any kind of book like a mystery or adventure. It could be about information books. Some don't have enough information and some books do, so there are different responses to different books." (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

Joseph's view that responses are unique to each individual seemed to lead to his belief that he learned how to do them on his own. He said, "Well, like nobody helped me to know how to do them. I just learned. Like it's just from me, and the way I think about it, that's all." (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

Marta

Marta defined response in terms of personal feelings, thoughts, and relations with stories and other experiences in her life.

> "Like I discuss my relations with the story and how I feel, and what I think and stuff like that. It could be about anything. It could be about a film, or somebody like a person, and what they said or did, or newsletter, or going to the zoo, or going to the mountains. Just anything, I guess." (Transcript, May 21, 1990)

Marta's view of responding also seemed to be tied to her belief that there was a relationship between understanding and responding.

> "Poor readers just can't respond. They often don't know that they are poor readers and they read the same books, but they don't know how to respond because they don't have any understanding." (Transcript, May 23, 1990)

Marta seemed to believe that her ability in responding came from within herself rather than through being taught.

> "Like with books, I learn from them. I think of how I would do it different and I think about my feelings. No one told me how. Mostly my responses are my own. Everybody has their own. I just do it. I try to understand what I read and I think about how I feel." (Transcript, May 21, 1990)

Darwin

Darwin's definitions of response reflected a recognition of his own personal

reactions to stories in terms of thoughts he had and emotions he experienced during reading. For example, he said,

> "Responding, well it's sharing your thoughts and your feelings about a book, and your ideas, and how you feel about the way it is written . . . . you might be reading a book that is very sad, and even end up crying because of how sad the story is." (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

Darwin's awareness that he reflected on experiences outside the story while he read helped to shape what response meant to him. During a group discussion about his thoughts while reading a book, he said,

> "Well, if that could happen to you, how you feel, like how you're feeling. You might laugh out loud or feel sad, or whatever." (Transcript, June 22, 1990)

Darwin believed the kind of response he made depended on whether or not he enjoyed a book, and response was not exclusive to books. He explained,

> "If you enjoy books, you have one kind of response, and if you don't your response is different. It doesn't have to be about a book. You can respond to anything, like going to a soccer game. You could respond during or after a telephone conversation, or with literature." (Transcript, May 16, 1990)

Summary of Children's Definitions of Response

In separate interviews the children defined response as meaning expressing their own thoughts and feelings and talking about parts of the story that were

important to them. The idea that their thoughts arose from prior experiences when they responded was also implicit in their comments. For example, Cameron referred to images in his mind and having thoughts he believed were unique to himself. Cameron also reflected on the importance of honesty and openness when talking about feelings in responses to stories. All six children seemed to believe that expressing their own feelings about the story as a whole, about the characters, and about the events was most important to them. With the exception of Elaine, the children were in agreement that they learned to express thoughts and feelings on their own. Elaine credited teachers with helping her. She said they helped because they expected her to respond sometimes. In other words, the practice helped.

## Teacher's Authority

### When Teachers Responded to Children's Responses

As mentioned earlier in this document, the children in this class recorded the books they had read on log sheets throughout the entire school year. They also had a response journal that they used for the purpose of responding to books they had read. Between September and February, the teachers responded to responses written by children in the classroom by asking questions, making comments, or making suggestions. The following scripts and comments reveal the nature of children's responses when teachers responded in writing to their responses.

Cameron. Cameron recorded that he read 30 books between September and June. Between September and February, he wrote responses to every

chapter of two books he was reading, and teachers responded in writing to most of them. During this time, Cameron was also reading other books that he did not write responses to. In response to The Egypt Game, Cameron wrote,

Dear Mrs. M.: This chapter was so-so but better than the others so far. Melanie and April started pretending and reading about Egypt, so this chapter wasn't too exciting.

The following response by a teacher implicitly reflected a view that either the teacher had greater knowledge about the story or knew more about what would create interest for Cameron than he did himself.

Dear C.: It does get better. Some books are slow at the beginning, and there is a surprise element in the story. Keep reading.

In his follow-up response, Cameron appeared to be trying to convince the teacher that he did not find this story interesting. The teacher's responses in the form of questions, however, continued to reflect the view that maybe Cameron was missing important ideas in the story. Cameron, who seemed to want to be perceived as a good student, provided answers to the questions though he did not elaborate on them.

Dear Mrs. M.: The main character in this story is Melanie. This chapter was O.K., but pretty boring as well. They did some more pretending with Marshall and used some pretty complicated Egypt words.

Dear C.: Does the author seem to have a good knowledge of a person in this age category?

Dear Mrs. M: Yes.

Dear C.: How does he show this knowledge?

Dear Mrs. M.: Describing.

Elaine. Between September and June, Elaine recorded that she read 52 books. She wrote responses to nine of them before the end of February. In her responses she often appeared to defer to teacher authority rather than her own feelings or thoughts about stories. Elaine, who seemed aware that she was well-liked by the teachers appeared comfortable in asking questions that might enable her to know more about them. This also resembled efforts to possibly endorse the teacher's views.

Dear Mrs. B.; I am reading The Look-Alike Girl. It takes place in an apartment. I was wondering, how do you choose your books?

The teacher's reply, which was 24 lines long, implicitly reflected views about varied ways to choose books.

Dear E.; I choose my books in many different ways . . . read book reviews . . . ask my husband . . . his favorites . . . . visiting book stores . . . leave the store with at least one book . . . . others impressions of books . . . . I can't wait to hear your impressions of the book The Look-Alike Girl.

Elaine's responses when she knew teachers would be responding to her seemed to reveal little or no personal involvement with the story even when attempts were made to encourage her to do so. The following response by Elaine again seems to reflect the teacher's attempt to get Elaine to reveal more of her personal feelings.

Dear Mrs. B.; I have started a Nancy Drew mystery book, The Elusive Heiress. It is quite good so far.

Dear E.; What do you find so appealing about Nancy Drew's books?

Dear Mrs. B.; I like Nancy Drew's because it is fun trying to solve the mystery. I also like the way the author makes suspense by his words.

Sheri. Sheri recorded that she read 37 books between September and June. She responded to every second or third chapter of four books between September and February. Sometimes Sheri, who seemed to passively accept the authority of teachers, gave curt or short answers to the questions teachers asked or did not respond to them at all. Also, she often retold story events even though she said teachers didn't want her to do that. On the other hand she seemed to believe teachers valued appreciation for stories, and her responses such as, "I think this is a great book!" seemed to be directed at giving teachers assurance that she thought the story was good.

In the following responses to Think Tank, Sheri, who often made responses that seemed to reflect her recognition of humor in incidents and stories, seemed to reveal her feelings about a story being hilarious to her. The teacher's responses, however, seemed to reflect implicit beliefs that there may be ideas about the story more important than those Sheri focused on.

Dear Mrs. M.; The book I am recently reading is Henry Reed's Think Tank. It's a hilarious book about Henry Reed and his friend Midge who open a think tank. Some of the customers they get have weird problems. I think this is a great book!

Dear S.; What is the most unusual problem? How did it get solved?

Dear Mrs. M.: All of them were the most unusual cases. One is when they had to make a father proud of his son. This was a great book!

Even though the teacher continued to encourage Sheri to focus on aspects of the

story she may have believed were important, Sheri's written comments seemed to reflect reasons why she liked this book so much.

> Dear S.; Are some of the problems really weird? Who would enjoy reading this book?
>
> Dear Mrs. M.; Yes, I think that anybody who likes strange and funny problems with crazy solutions would like this book. It is a terrific and great book!

Joseph. Joseph's responses between September and February to six of the 15 books he recorded as having read during the year seemed mainly devoted to answering the teacher's questions and convincing the teacher that books were either boring or excellent. For example, in January, Joseph was reading and writing responses to When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit by Judith Kerr.

> Dear Mrs. B.; This book is sort of boring. Nothing really happened and I'm already on the 6th chapter. Nothing much is happening.

The teacher's response seemed to implicitly reflect her knowledge about ideas Joseph needed to focus on to make the story more interesting for him. Joseph, who was quiet and polite in class, appeared to be politely letting the teacher know that he wanted to read a different book and perhaps her approval.

> Dear J.; I would agree with you. I haven't read your book, but when I saw the title, I would have expected it to be exciting and filled with suspense. Has the author created any suspense at all? Is the word choice rich or grey? Are you still reading the book? I would love to hear what your thoughts are on the book.
>
> Dear Mrs. B.; I decided to stop reading it because it's getting really

boring so now I'm going to read The Magician's Nephew by C. S. Lewis. When Joseph did not answer these questions, the teacher seemed to have difficulty accepting Joseph's view that the book was not interesting for him and needed to know his specific reasons for not liking it. There was also an implicit message that the reader is not doing his job if he doesn't like books that appear on 'recommended lists of books to read'.

> Dear J.; I'm really curious to know what made the book When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit so boring. Could you be more specific as to why you didn't like it? The book appears on Children's Books To Read List over and over. Why do you think the book would be so highly recommended? Have you read any of C. S. Lewis books?
>
> Dear Mrs. B.; The book got boring because after the third chapter the author just started to describe the day at school that the kids had so it got boring.
>
> Dear J.; I hope your feelings about When Hitler Stole The Pink Rabbit won't dissuade you from reading other books by C. S. Lewis. He is a very symbolic writer. What are you reading now?

The fact that Joseph did not respond to this response may have implicitly demonstrated that he wanted to move on to another topic. This series of responses seemed to involve a struggle for Joseph, who seemed to seldom voluntarily talk with the teachers at other times in class, to write a response that expressed his feelings about stories.

Marta. Marta recorded that she read 67 books between September and June. Between September and February, she wrote responses to six books.

During this period, Marta wrote responses two or three times as she read each book, and most of her responses were replied to by teachers.

In her initial response to a story, Marta, who appeared to take school work very seriously, seemed to implicitly set the stage for deeper and further discussions about the story. For example, she wrote, "Some strange things happen when the doll turns to life." However, the teacher's response did not make reference to that comment, and Marta deferred to answering their questions. The following responses exemplify this, as well as how she seemed to finally ignore teacher questions and express her view that the story was boring.

> Dear Mrs. M.; I am reading a book called The Haunted Doll House by Susan Blake. It's a very interesting story about a girl and her mother moving to an enormous house in a small town and making it into a breakfast inn. When they go . . . . Then some strange things happen when the doll turns to life.
>
> Dear M.; I bet you will meet some unusual situations and characters. Why did they move to the small town in the first place?
>
> Dear Mrs. M.; They moved to the house because the girl's uncle died and left them his house and since they lived in a small crowded apartment, they decided to move.
>
> Dear M.; Where are they moving to? Do you think things will be quite a bit different in a small town? Have you ever lived in a small town?
>
> Dear Mrs. M.; I didn't like the doll story. It was very boring because the thing which was happening was very boring.

Darwin. Darwin recorded that he read 32 books between September and

June. Up until February, he wrote responses to most chapters of five books. The responses he wrote reflected his respect for the authority of teachers and consisted mainly of replies to questions asked by them. The following responses based on the book, The Great Brain, exemplify these notions:

Dear Mrs. B; I think Tom The Great Brain is way too greedy. Whenever he helps someone, he expects a reward of cash of course.

Dear D.; How do you think Tom has become that way?

Dear Mrs. B.; Loves money.

Dear D.; If you were Tom, how would you deal with the problem of greed? What advice would you have for Tom?

Dear Mrs. B.; I would ask for support and for the kids to never to make bets with him, no matter how crazy it sounds.

The teacher's responses reflected an implicit message that teachers had specific knowledge about what was important in stories. Darwin, who seemed to be regarded by the teachers as a top student, wrote responses that confirmed he did read what they wrote, and he acknowledged their comments and questions through his curt-sounding responses.

Dear D.; Why would you like to read the other great brain book?

Dear Mrs. B.; Because I liked this one.

Dear D.; What would you hope to get from it?

Dear Mrs. B.; Education.

When Direct Teaching Preceded Children's Responses

When the children had completed writing their own stories in a class

project, they were told they would have opportunities to respond to stories written by peers. During a teacher-directed lesson on how to write responses on June 4th, one of the teachers talked about qualities in good stories such as story line and interesting ideas that capture readers attention, and introduced and discussed phrases and words that could be used to respond to stories. Some of these were "fine tuned", "clear", "people acting like people", and "words set the mood." On June 5th, 1990, another teacher reviewed the lesson from the day before and introduced more words and phrases that the children could use. Some of these were "creative", "enhances the story", "illustrations set the mood" and "people look like people." On June 6th and 7th, the children exchanged their stories with others, and responded to them on reflective response formats. This section provides views of each of the six children's responses.

Cameron. Following the direct teaching lesson, Cameron, who seemed to want to be perceived as a good student, wrote responses to peer's stories that appeared to be shaped by his perceptions of teachers values concerning vocabulary, neatness, and story quality in the written stories. Most of his comments seemed to reflect an understanding that teachers might have wanted him to evaluate peers' stories. These comments were impersonal and objectively critical of peer's efforts.

> Response to Charlene's Story. The illustrations were O.K. They would have been even better if the pencil marks were erased. The story was good but hard to follow.
>
> Response to Robyn's Story. This book only has two illustrations. These illustrations were clear.

Cameron's sensitive and kind ways, however, were reflected in the concluding subjective and personal comment he made in some of his responses to peers. To Charlene's story he added,

> The idea of having a temple in a mountain is marvellous!

Elaine. Elaine's responses to a story written by peers following the teacher-directed lesson seemed to reflect her interpretation of the qualities she believed teachers valued in stories written by children. They also reflected an impression that she may have thought teachers expected a particular vocabulary and style of writing to be used.

> Response to Andy's Project Story. The illustrations in Food For Thought were wonderfully coloured. They fit the text perfectly. I really think that this piece of writing and illustrations are perfect. I think the poems gathered in this book are beautifully formed.

Elaine's responses also seemed to indicate her relation with the story and why she liked it.

> Response to Sheri's Project Story. You used very descriptive words. It was an enjoyable story because it had adventure, humour, and a happy ending.

Elaine's responses to another peer's project story seemed to reflect the values she appeared to have about being nice to others when she gave them supportive comments. She wrote,

> They (the illustrations) are way better than I am able to do.
> I liked the way your characters seemed to have different voices when you read it out loud.

Sheri. After the teacher-directed lesson on qualitites to look for in stories and examples of vocabulary that could be used, Sheri used teacher vocabulary and commented on both illustrations and text. For example, in response to Tami's project story, she wrote,

> Terrific illustrations. Lots of great colouring fits the text like a glove. The illustrations were really funny. I just loved your poems because they were hilarious and also very creative.

In response to Cameron's project story she wrote,

> The illustrations were very detailed and were very well done. It has a good story line. It was creative and original.
>
> The characters were funny and original. It was hilarious.

Sheri's comments using the word "hilarious" reflected a possible desire to include supportive comments in the response.

Joseph. Responses written to peers' stories, after the teacher-directed lesson, seemed to reflect Joseph's understanding that certain aspects of the story were to be evaluated and criticized in a particular kind of vocabulary. His responses also seemed to reflect compliance with the direct-teaching lesson.

> Response to Cam's Story. The pictures were well illustrated and had fine detail. I think the video game could have been more clear. There could of been a little more writing.
>
> Response to Rob's Story. The illustrations developed the story. It showed why the contestants kept getting the same number. I thought you could of had more illustrations. You developed the characters so I could tell their personality traits.

Marta. Marta's responses after the lesson seemed to reflect an understanding that teachers had imparted a legitimate response vocabulary that was to be used. Even though Marta did not usually communicate freely with others, her response to Robyn's story seemed to reflect a view that personal compliments were important in these responses.

> Response to Robyn's Story. Your illustrations were marvellous. They blended in with the words somehow really well. Your colours you chose were just great. Your story was interesting.

Marta's concluding comments to this response,

> I wanted to keep on reading. I couldn't stop,

reflected support for Robyn.

Darwin. Following the lesson, Darwin's responses to peer's stories reflected his cheerful and positive nature in his personal responses. His responses also reflected his possible interpretation of qualities teachers valued in stories written by children. His responses seemed to reflect a belief that there was a particular vocabulary to use, and that he should comment on both illustrations and text.

> Response to Charles' Project Story. I like the illustration on the cover because you made it very detailed and used the right colours. Your mountains look professionally done, and I'm glad you used colours. I really enjoyed your ending and your description and choice of words are excellent. Well done!

## Discussion of the Influence of Teacher's Authority on Children's Responses

Between September and February, teachers responded to children's

responses to stories they chose themselves, by asking questions and making comments. Consistent with studies on hidden curriculum (Apple and King, 1976; Jackson, 1968; and Willis, 1977), questions and comments made by the teachers reflected implicit beliefs and assumptions about whose knowledge was most important. The implicit messages in this study provided clues about whose knowledge they should use when interpreting stories and responding to them. The children's awareness of the connections between power and knowledge were also reflected in their deference to te[redacted]authority when they replied to the questions asked. In Marta's initial response to The Haunted Doll House for example, she seemed to be providing a basis from which she could talk about her feelings about the story, but then appeared to revert to replying to the teacher's questions about why the characters in the story moved to the small town. The responses children wrote seemed to also express their likes or dislikes of the story. They focused on issues and related the characters and elements in the story to themselves, but these responses were not consistent with their definitions of response. Their definitions that responses were an expression of their own thoughts and feelings seemed to reflect intrigue with the story and their opinions about motives of characters or issues and events. There seemed to be no attempts by the teacher to amplify Sheri's responses about humor in the story, "It's a hilarious book about . . . . " or Marta's comment about strange things happening in the story, "It's a very interesting story . . . . some strange things happen when the doll turns to life," though both seemed to express awareness of certain effects that are created by the form of the story. Also, the children's implicit beliefs that teachers expected them to like the books they

read was reflected in the way they continually commented in their responses that they did in fact like the stories. Sheri, for example, concluded most of her responses with comments such as "great book" and "terrific and great book." Stating they did not like a story or found it boring often led to a request from the teacher for justification. Joseph, for example, persisted three times in his responses to convince the teacher that he found When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit boring. Her persistence in knowing why seems to reflect an implicit belief that teachers also believe children must like the books they read.

The responses these children wrote when teachers responded to them seemed to reflect beliefs that their responses had to match expectations they perceived teachers as having. The fact that their beliefs appeared to be reinforced by teacher's questions and comments is partly explained by social definitions that children have internalized about the way school is (Apple, 1990; Sharp, 1980). Sharp (1980) states, "People are engaged in processes which legitimate . . . and reinforce the concept of the teacher as the pivotal authority, having the power to define what counts as knowledge" (p. 124).

The direct teaching lesson on how to write responses to stories written by peers not only gave implicit messages that there was a legitimate response vocabulary that teachers knew and that children should learn and use, but also seemed to give legitimacy to modes of learning that promote passivity and rule following. Reflective of Freire's (1972b) concept of "banking education", in which individuals are given knowledge that is later turned in for credit or reward, in their responses the children seemed to use teacher vocabulary and sentences. Elaine's responses, "they fit the text perfectly" and "the poems

gathered in this book are beautifully formed", and Sheri's response, "lots of great colouring fits the text like a glove" are examples of expressions which seemed alien to these children's own ways of expressing thoughts and feelings. Probst (1988) cautions that when analysis is overemphasized, "students may see the text as something to work on rather than an experience to live through" (p.59). The responses these children made reflect Protherough's (1986) view that "instead of simply describing the effects of reading on themselves, children will seek reasons that appear to be valid to others" (p. 41). He also points out that because younger children are not as sophisticated as older students, their responses are dependent on teacher vocabulary and they write "with one eye on the teacher" (p. 41). The direct teaching of how to write responses seemed to foster this type of dependence.

In contrast to the objective and distant statements of attempted critical judgements made in their responses to peers, their responses also reflected awareness of "relationships between the reader and the book" (p.40) and reasons for liking a story. "I wanted to keep on reading. I couldn't stop" is an example of the type of supportive comments the children wrote. The view that being supportive was important may have been socially constructed from classroom experiences, from other life experiences, or from both. Social rules instilled from an early age about being nice and the need of children to gain support from others they identified with may have encouraged the supportive comments. Musgrave (1988) points out that rules of reciprocity which have been found to exist between peers in school lead to exchanges of support in relationships with other children.

## When Children Wrote Responses for Themselves

The children were each given a response journal at the beginning of the school year in which they were to write responses to the stories they read. Each day the journals were handed to the teachers so they could respond to children's responses to stories they read. The teachers abandoned the practice of responding to responses written by the children at the beginning of March. However many of the children, including the six key informants, continued to write responses though they did not hand them in to the teachers. The following scripts and comments reveal the nature of children's responses to stories they read when they directed their own responses and had authority over the knowledge they used.

Cameron. Cameron's choice of books and self-directed responses seemed to reflect keen interest in characters about his age who were experiencing growing up problems and other issues he could relate to, as well as books through which he could indirectly experience adventure, danger, and gruesome activities. In response to No Beasts, No Children, he wrote,

> I am already drawn to this story because I can relate to the dogs involved in the story because when I had a dog in New Zealand I had to move and I had to give my dog away. This is a very thrilling book so far with lots of action. (Journal, April 24, 1990)

In response to It Seemed Like A Good Idea At The Time, he wrote,

> I've recommended this book to a lot of people. Like we're boys

and this story is about girls and we want to know. (Journal, undated)

Cameron appeared to struggle to enjoy The Hobbit, because he seemed to realize from teachers' comments that teachers valued the story. However, his self-directed response, consistent with his definition of response, reflected honesty in the importance to him of relating to and making connections with story characters.

> The characters in The Hobbit are really unique even though I can't relate to any of them. The characters are funny and magical. I believe that they would be kind, strong, and not that caring. (Journal, June 18, 1990)

Cameron was also drawn to books by Stephen King. These books were openly frowned upon by his teachers and parents, and though he did not write responses to them, he always had one in his desk tray and read it often.

Elaine. Interest in people and social and moral values influenced Elaine's self-directed responses. Her responses seemed to reflect an identity with story characters and her values about people caring for each other. In response to The Secret Carousel, she wrote,

> I felt really good when I read it because of the affection that goes on in this family . . . Lindy and her grandfather were very close to each other. Everyone would always care about each other before they thought of themselves. It was a really, really good book. (Journal, May 20, 1990)

Some of Elaine's responses seemed to be influenced by her perspectives of right and wrong and good and bad. Following, is an excerpt from her written response to But She's So Cute.

> . . . what happened in it was there's this girl, and she puts on this act.

She thinks it will impress the boys. She flirts in like a major bad way. This book is good because it teaches you a lesson not to do things like that, and her friends learn that lesson. (Journal, May 15, 1990)

Elaine's responses appeared to be also influenced by her interest in vicariously being involved in and solving mysteries. These responses also seemed to reflect her awareness of complex social relations that can exist between others. For example, in her response to The Green Gables Detectives, she wrote,

I don't think that the umpire killed Miss Martin. I think that Jeni girl is up to something. I just don't know what for sure, but I do know A. P. Cole has something to do with it. (Journal, April 28, 1990)

Sheri. Sheri read and responded to A Swiftly Tilting Planet during most of the study. She also read and responded to mysteries and fiction that involved characters close to her own age. The fact that Sheri made frequent use of the tape recorder and wrote on slips of paper when she couldn't immediately locate her response journal seemed to be an indication of how much she enjoyed responding to the stories she read.

She said she enjoyed talking about stories she read more than writing responses but still continued to write in her journal. Her responses, which seemed to reflect relations she made between her own experiences and story events and her struggle to make sense of events with which she could not make these relations with, are indicative of her involvement in the story. For example, in response to A Swiftly Tilting Planet, she wrote,

Like the chapter I'm reading right now. There are sad parts and there

are happy parts, like when the baby was born. There are even confusing parts, like when they go time travelling. I get confused with the people because it's a totally different scene. (Transcript, May 15, 1990)

Sheri's responses appeared to reveal the strong relationships she formed with the characters, Charles, Meg and Calvin, as children in A Wrinkle in Time, and later when Meg and Calvin are married and Charles is a teenager in A Swiftly Tilting Planet.

I really got scared in one part of this book because Charles just about died. I'm really looking forward to the end and finding out if they're able to save the world before WW3, and what's going to happen to Charles, Meg, and the rest of the family. (Oral response, April 30, 1990)

A few days later, her responses seemed to reflect a perception that she understood the grown-up feelings these characters were having. She also seemed to be relating to notions about life beyond her immediate world in her writing.

It's getting emotional . . . . a baby was being born to Meg and Calvin and the adventurous part was when Charles goes riding with Gardier, the unicorn in time, and all these things happen to him while he's riding, and he manages to keep his spirits up. (Transcript, May 15, 1990)

Some of Sheri's responses seemed to be influenced by her intrigue and curiosity about experiences of others her age. In her response to Here She is Ms. Teeny Wonderful, she wrote,

Carol Weatherspoon has no idea what's in store for her when her mother enters her in the Ms. Teeny Wonderful contest. Neither do Jean and

Joan Campbell when they are against her in the contest. (Journal, June 14, 1990)

Joseph. Joseph's choice of books changed from fantasy, contemporary fiction, and historical fiction to mystery stories at the beginning of March. Though Joseph was very quiet in class and talked little in teacher-directed discussions, his written responses to the mysteries were lengthy and seemed to reflect high levels of enthusiasm. His responses appeared to be influenced by his personal enjoyment of vicariously experiencing fear, concern, confusion, and excitement in the mysteries he read. Following is a response he wrote to Vampires of Ottawa.

> Chapter three was pretty exciting when Liz saved that girl. It was weird how that man that was coming toward the drowning girl vanished after Liz saved her. This book is really scary and exciting. I knew Lobos was involved with the vampires cause when he set Liz waiting for him, he never came back for her, and the last night when Jeane was coming to help, Lobos wasn't there either. (Journal, undated)

Joseph's responses also seemed to reflect his loss of interest in books from which he did not experience the same intensity of excitement. In response to Baseball Crazy, he wrote,

> It's kind of boring now in Baseball Crazy, so I decided to read a choose your own adventure book. I got to be the detective...and choose who to talk to and where to investigate. I did find the killer and I finished the book at home. Now, I'm going to read Baseball Crazy again. (Journal, June 20, 1990)

Marta. Marta read mainly mystery stories portraying characters about her age who were involved in exciting adventures. Marta's self-directed responses seemed to reflect a fascination with analyzing actions of the characters. Her serious nature was also reflected in the way she seemed to criticize the ways in which mysteries were written and shaped her response to Spirit In The Rainforests.

> At first Bunni seemed to act and talk like a girl of six or seven, but now she seems 16 or 17 . . . . I sometimes wonder how old Tom is because Eric Wilson never puts ages in books. I think he should. (Journal, undated)

Although Marta's responses seemed to reflect her critical view of the way authors wrote mysteries, they also seemed influenced by her view of the author's power to create situations she could relate to. This shaped her written response to Vancouver Nightmare.

> I finished reading this book in one day. It got so exciting and so interesting I read while I was eating supper. The author influenced me to read by his words, and of course, the subject. By the end of Chapter seven, I was exhausted out. I still planned to continue reading. (Journal, undated)

Marta appeared to have a desire to be deeply involved in the lives of characters in stories she read. This is evident in her written response to The Green Gables Detectives.

> I would really like to join them. Sometimes I feel like I could jump into a book to be a character. In this book so far I would like to be

Liz or a Japanese girl called Makiko. (Journal, April 30, 1990)

Marta, who was from a single parent family, also seemed intrigued with peer and family social relations, and this is evident in her written response to Two Parents Too Many.

> Jenny was an interesting character because of what she did. Like hardly ever eating, staying cooped up in her room, and other things. Vivian seemed like a nice, pretty woman. It must have been a pretty boring life for Katy and Jenny, stuck with only a health food mother. (Journal, June 22, 1990)

Marta seemed to make sense of experiences of characters in stories by reflecting on her own life experiences and identifying with them. Following is an example of her written response to The Green Gables Detectives.

> I think Liz was kind of stupid to take steak and potatoes when everyone else took lobster under the church. I would have taken something I have never tried, not like Liz. (Journal, April 24, 1990)

Darwin. The self-directed responses written by Darwin seemed to be shaped by his personal interests and feelings toward and about story characters and events. His responses appeared to focus mainly on relations between himself and characters in the story. For example, when he read Why Just Me?, a story about a girl growing up and going through puberty, he wrote,

> This is a real great book. It includes Shannon's thoughts and feelings, and gives you lots of information on things that happen when you go through puberty, and it is very funny. (Journal, May 6, 1990)

Darwin's responses seemed to reflect issues of importance in his own life.

The relations he made between himself and characters and events in stories appeared to confirm the normalcy of his own life experiences and helped to influence his responses. In response to How a Weirdo and a Ghost Can Change Your Entire Life, he wrote,

> This book is very humorous so far. Just like the title, the book is kind of weird. The character in this book has an older sister who is a teenager, and I have a teenager brother so I have some of the same experiences she did. (Journal, June 9, 1990)

Darwin appeared to enjoy vicariously placing himself in adventurous situations with characters his age, tracking down clues, and solving mysteries with or for them. For example, in response to The Green Gables Detectives, he said,

> "I was right! Oh, Wow! I knew it! See that mountie was only a mountie in disguise. Oh this is great! Well, I knew Miss Martin would die." (Transcript, April 30, 1990)

Darwin's responses also reflected an intense involvement in some stories. For example, after reading The Unmasking of Ksan, he wrote the response which follows:

> I thought this book was great! It had a real unexpected ending. At the end it was full of action and my heart was going 1,000 beats per minute! I'm disappointed Esra got sent to jail but I'm glad that Graham overcame his fear of heights. (Journal, May 20, 1990)

When Children Shared Their Responses With Peers

The children often shared their responses to stories they read with peers

and friends. These discussions, which were informal in nature, took place between children without teachers present at clusters, at instructional groupings, and during small group activities. Sometimes two or three children would ask to talk with each other on the tape recorder, would take it into the hallway, and without adults present would discuss stories they were reading. Peer discussions were also recorded as they occurred while the children were involved in other activities. These discussions were recorded in writing or on audio tape by the researcher. This section reveals the nature of children's responses when they shared their views and interpretations of stories with peers.

Cameron. Stories that related to his own life experiences appeared to be intriguing to Cameron and reflected the kind of responses he made. For example, in a discussion about Why Just Me?, Cameron's verbal response was,

> "I just couldn't put it down because it was sad at times and it was happy, and like she found her boyfriend. Like she was lost with her boyfriend and they were drifting apart, and they made friends again . . . she was about my age, and I would be sad like her too." (Transcript, May 1, 1990)

Cameron's interest in people seemed to be reflected in responses that he made in peer group discussions in which he expressed his understandings of differences in people in society. For example, in a group discussion comparing the Prince and Erith from The Prince and the Goosegirl, Cameron's response was,

> "Erith is a very tough witted girl. The Prince was pretty mean. He thought he was the cream of the cream . . . . thought uppity of himself, like posh." (Transcript, June 12, 1990)

Another response made by Cameron during a group discussion comparing The Prince and the Goosegirl and The Legend of Scarface reflected an understanding he seemed to have about people's motives in society to achieve goals.

"It was different how the Prince and Scarface tried to get their wives. Like the Prince, he tried to get her to be poor and to need him. And Scarface, he worked for her to get her. The Prince had to try to get her by force and money and stuff. Scarface, he was patient and nice and tried to get her by not harming her or forcing her." (Transcript, June 15, 1990)

Cameron also enjoyed talking with peers about the Stephen King books he enjoyed reading. His responses to these stories appeared to reflect his enjoyment of indirect experiences with the adult characters involved in adventure, danger, and gruesome activities. In a conversation with one peer, he said,

"These books are really scary, suspenseful, and gross. Like if someone gets shot, they just explain the gory details like guts coming out and stuff." (Transcript, May 12, 1990)

Elaine. Elaine appeared to enjoy discussing stories with peers, and this seemed to be reflected in the amount of talk she contributed in group discussions. She also seemed to have strong values about friendship that also appeared to influence the kind of responses she made in a discussion about The Prince and the Goosegirl.

S I think I'd like Erith better as a friend. I wouldn't want the Prince as a friend really.

E Yeah, cause he seems like such a hot shot. Like he thinks he's really forceful. Well, Erith, she says what she thinks, she doesn't think about what she says really, but I think she's strong physically too, because she stands up to the prince and the strongest people in the country couldn't do that, and she's not dumb. (Transcript, June 12, 1990).

Elaine, who valued conformity to rules, seemed to enjoy being vicariously involved in mysteries, and in putting together clues to solve the motives of people. This appeared to be reflected in her contributions to the following group discussion about The Green Gables Detectives

D I think it's the lady with the red hair.

E It's probably, she's one of the top suspicions. You can tell she's probably been on drugs. She's so crazy.

J But who could have killed Miss Martin?

E Well, it could have been her ex husband.

D It could have been one of the helping hands, probably him.

The following comment by Elaine in the same conversation also seems to reflect her values concerning relations in society and her evaluation of effects in the story. It also appears that her excitement about being involved in these events in the story seems to reflect her positive enthusiasm.

E Humphrey, the ex husband seems so sexist toward women and Miss Martin seems so, well, there's so many neat things happening and there are neat possibilities. (Transcript, April 30, 1990)

Sheri. Sheri was frequently observed reading and appeared to enjoy talking and writing about the book A Swiftly Tilting Planet that she read during most of

the study. She seemed to enjoy talking with others about her own relationships with stories she read. This is reflected in her verbal statement about A Swiftly Tilting Planet which follows,

> "Well, I just feel I'm part of this book, like in life. I'm a person that's watching what's happening . . . . Things could happen, but then some things couldn't and that makes it fun to be there and pretend." (Transcript, May 3, 1990)

Sheri, who seemed to enjoy talking with Elaine about fashions and often asked others about costs of things they were wearing, seemed to be aware of socieconomic status as is reflected in her responses. In group discussions, she often made comments about wealth. For example, a response she made when comparing characters in The Prince and the Goosegirl and The Nightingale with Elaine was,

> E Well, the Prince would be most muscular.
>
> S I don't know. I think the emperor would be the most important and the richest. (Transcript, June 15, 1990)

In another group discussion about Erith, the Prince, Scarface, and Singing Rain, the comments were,

> L Who would marry the Prince anyway?
>
> S But he changed. He changed for her. He was rich too. (Transcript, June 18, 1990)

Sheri seemed to enjoy fantasy, and also appeared able to understand the relationship between reality in her own world and events in the story, and this was reflected in the kinds of responses she made to peers about A Swiftly Tilting

Planet. In response to Elaine, she said,

> "Sometimes, when it gets too fantasy, I like to be just watching what's happening and not really be there." (Fieldnotes, April 30, 1990).

Sheri seemed fascinated by the fantasy in this story, and often talked about it in relation to her own reality. The following response also reflects a possible fascination with sorting out reality and fantasy in a futuristic imaginary world. She said,

> "You see, it has parts that are not realistic but still there are realistic parts. Well, some is fantasy and some is real." (Fieldnotes, May 20, 1990).

Joseph. Joseph, who seemed quiet and didn't draw attention to himself in class, seemed to enjoy discussing stories he was reading with peers, and his responses often reflected the value he placed on kindness, fairness, and friendship. In a response made during a discussion about The Prince and the Goosegirl, Joseph said,

> "I think the Prince was pretty mean. It's like 'Will you marry me?', then he took her goose and then her money, and I thought he was really mean to do that." (Transcript, June 12, 1990)

The following comments by Joseph during a discussion about characters in The Prince and the Goosegirl and The Legend of Scarface suggests he has some understanding of inequities in society and is suspicions about connections between wealth and greed.

> "I liked Scarface a lot because of how he was with his riches. Like most people, because of their riches, they end up being mean and end

up getting more greedy. Scarface didn't do that and his wife was his most prized possession, instead of his money." (Transcript, June 15, 1990)

Joseph also made responses which seemed to reflect his need to share his interests with his friends. Following is his verbal response to peers about The Green Gables Detective.

"Well, I just like this story so much, and I don't like to stop reading when I start. So much is happening and everyone is so suspicious. I've been telling my friends about it, and Darwin and I are trying to figure it out." (Transcript, April 26, 1990)

Marta. Marta was very quiet in group discussions but seemed to share her feelings most openly when she felt comfortable with the group members. For example, when the group was talking about Erith's strength in character, Marta's response about personal desires reflected a level of comfort that was not often observed.

"Yeah, but you also have to remember she has long golden curls, she has a tiny waist, and she's pretty and skinny. That's the way I'd like to be, but then being strong in other ways is just as good." (Transcript, June 12, 1990)

Marta talked often with Lana about books she read. She reflected her own personal feelings on the way she thought characters may have felt. For example, in her comments to Lana about Two Parents Too Many, she said,

"You know, it must have been a pretty boring life for Katy and Jenny, stuck only with a health food mother." (Transcript, June 18, 1990)

Marta seemed to enjoy the indirect experiences she got from reading

mysteries, identifying clues, and solving the mystery before others, and this seemed to influence the following response.

> "Well, some mysteries have notes, and I don't like that kind. Real mysteries don't have clues on notes. They have clues in the things that are happening, and you have to get to know the characters. That's the trick." (Transcript, April 27, 1990)

Darwin. Darwin, who seemed fascinated by stories about peers his age, also seemed to enjoy vicariously working with story characters his own age as he read, tracking down clues and solving mysteries before adult characters did. In response to his friend Joseph about The Lost Treasure of Castle Loma, he said,

> "Well, it was so exciting. Everybody was double crossing everyone so I couldn't trust anyone." (Transcript, June 6, 1990)

He seemed to like to give his views about motives of characters and possible solutions to mysteries in peer discussions, and this was reflected in his responses. In a discussion with Joseph and Elaine about The Green Gables Detectives, he said,

> "It could have been one of the helping hands, that man who got in a fight with Miss Martin at the, uh, you know at this production thing where this guy had a fight with the other guy, and the guy died after, and Miss Martin wouldn't say anything until she got the reward, and when she told on him, then she got the reward. It's probably him." (Transcript, April 26, 1990)

The views Darwin seemed to have about power relations between people appeared to influence the kinds of responses he made during a discussion about

The Prince and the Goosegirl.

D The Prince thought he could have anything he wanted so he took everything.

J Yes, that's true. He took everything.

D I thought the Prince was boastful. He was always bragging 'You are mine', and all this, and how he could have anything he wanted.

(Transcript, June 18, 1990)

The following response seems to reflect Darwin's values about recognizing the positive in others, and this in turn may have influenced his response in the group discussion about The Prince and the Goosegirl.

"I totally agree with you because the Prince was a mean jerk. Maybe if the story would go on, like then the Prince would have more chance to do nice things and you could forget a bit how mean he was."

(Transcript, June 15, 1990)

Discussion of the Influence of Children's Authority on Responses

Even though in March the teachers abandoned the idea of reading and responding to responses written by children, many children continued to write them. During this time, their responses were longer than when teachers responded to them, and consistent with Rosenblatt's (1978) views about encouraging children to reflect on experiences during reading, they reflected the children's use of their own knowledge and personal relations with the story characters and events in terms of their own interests and social issues. Cameron,

in particular, made many references to relations between characters and events in the story and his own experiences. For example, he made references to his dog in New Zealand in his responses to No Beasts, No Children. The potential for the children to understand their own lived experiences was also reflected in their responses, as in Cameron's reference to boys and girls his own age who had similar interests and concerns as himself. In addition, their responses, such as Marta's comments about Jenny and Katy being stuck with a health food mother in Two Parents Too Many, reflected analysis of their own and others' social lives, particularly in the broader context of home and community.

Consistent with views by Purves and Beach (1972) that readers are interested in the content of the story, and Harding (1968) and Rosenblatt (1980) that children should be encouraged to reflect on personal experiences, the responses children made reflected their interest in the content of the story and their verification of characters and events in terms of their own experiences and personal knowledge. For example, they expressed intrigue with their own opinions about issues, events, and motives. They also noted the effects of particular formal elements of the story, for example Marta's description that the "trick" of real mysteries is having clues rather than notes, and where "you have to know the characters."

These responses made it evident that when children perceive the teacher as wanting a particular kind of response they respond in a voice that is not theirs. When children's responses are influenced by perspectives that are shaped by their views of what is important to themselves, their own voice is heard and their responses reflect aesthetic experiences in reading. Rosenblatt (1980) cautions

that "the great problem, as I see it, in many school and college literature classrooms today is that the picture - the aesthetic experience, the work - is missing, yet children are called upon to build an analytical or critical frame for it" (p. 393-394).

The children also responded to stories in peer group discussions where adults were not part of the group. When the children were involved in these discussions, they shared interests, problems, and backgrounds and their talk reflected Habermas' (1979) ideal speech situation in which they each seemed to have equal rights to talk, to question, and to discuss. They appeared to all agree that they disliked characters such as the Prince who was unfair to others in The Prince and the Goosegirl. They used vocabulary such as Elaine's word "hot shot" and Cameron's words "posh" and "uppity" that seemed to representative of their pre-teen cultural expressions. Consistent with Giroux's (1981) views concerning the value of readers making connections between themselves and society through discussing and questioning literature, these children made use of personal and practical knowledge they had about their immediate social worlds, and expressed values concerning the broader society. For example, Joseph's view that Scarface did not become mean and greedy because of his wealth, did not fit his belief that that sometimes happened in society. As suggested by Beach (1990) the children discovered insights about themselves and others through discussing the stories with each other.

They also discussed understandings about social classes and motives for achieving goals and power relations in society when they talked about the stories, The Prince and the Goosegirl and Scarface. Their responses reflected

their own perspectives of story characters, events, problems, and solutions, particularly when they discussed mystery stories such as The Green Gables Detectives.

## Discussion of Influences of Authority on Children's Responses to Literature

Through post-site analysis of classroom observation notes, written responses, transcripts of taped verbal responses and interviews, and samples of children's work, definite trends were revealed about the nature of children's responses in different interpretive communities in the classroom. Interviews with each of the children revealed that their definition of response meant to express their own thoughts and feelings and to talk about parts of stories that were important to them. These views and their comments that their thoughts were unique to themselves during reading suggests these children are aware of their own reading process. Their views also support transactionalist views that children create meaning during reading by reflecting on unique background knowledge and experiences (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1990; and Rosenblatt, 1978).

The children's definitions, which seemed to reflect their views of what was most meaningful for them as individuals when they read and responded to literature, were not consistent with the way they responded when teachers directed their response. Questions and comments that teachers made in their written responses to the children's responses implicitly and explicitly reflected a view that the teachers had knowledge about how to respond that they could help children to learn. The teachers' practice of guiding the responses by asking questions such as "Does the author seem to have a good knowledge of a person

in this age category?" and "How does he show this knowledge?" is consistent with a structuralist orientation such as Culler's (1975), toward the importance of knowledge of conventions in literature used to develop content in a story on the one hand, and on the other, Sharp's (1980) view that these practices legitimate the teacher as "the pivotal authority" (p.124) who has the power to "define what is to count as knowledge" (p. 124). By asking specific text analysis questions such as how the author shows knowledge about people, the teacher appears to be drawing the child's attention to how the text has the meaning that she perceives it to have. These practices also help to develop and reinforce children's views about the relationship between authority and knowledge in the classroom (Apple, 1990; Jackson, 1968; and Sharp, 1980).

The children's views about the kind of knowledge that is valued in the classroom is learned from an early age (Apple, 1990) and may be deeply set. For the children in this study, this may have contributed to their inability or reluctance to amplify their responses by using their own personal knowledge to achieve higher levels of interpretation when teachers asked the kinds of questions that would enable them to do that. For example, when Mrs. B. asked Elaine what she found appealing about Nancy Drew books, Elaine simply wrote that she liked to solve the mystery and liked how the author created suspense. In contrast, in her self directed responses Elaine reflected on her identity with story characters and her interest in vicariously being involved in shaping mysteries.

The teacher-directed lessons on how to respond seemed to give children the view that responses to peers stories were to be critical judgements. Their

responses, in which they used vocabulary suggested by teachers and voices that sounded like teachers, may be based on the children's beliefs, values, and feelings about school and the roles of teachers and students in school (Apple, 1990). These responses following the teacher-directed lessons on how to respond reflect the structuralist perspective (Culler, 1975) that knowledge of "systems of conventions . . . make texts readable" (Protherough, 1986, p.44). The structuralist orientation to reader response (Culler, 1975) supports the teacher-directed lessons on how to respond, whereas social definitions about school knowledge (Apple, 1990) help to explain inconsistencies between the way the children responded following the teacher-directed lessons and their definitions of response. Apple (1990) contends that children learn to differentiate between "school knowledge" and "my knowledge" (p.51) by living in the classroom. The children's responses were also consistent with Musgrave's (1988) view that social rules of reciprocity, learned early in life, lead to exchanges of children's support for one another.

Inconsistencies between children's definitions and their self directed responses and the responses they wrote under teacher direction support concerns expressed by Egan (1988), Eisner (1985), Fish (1980), Iser (1990), Meek (1988), and Rosenblatt (1978), who contend that emphasis on teacher approval may not produce readers who establish relations between themselves and the text. When the children perceived their responses to reading as being controlled by the teacher's authority over the knowledge they used, the source of their responses came from outside themselves and their responses tended not to reflect their own personal and practical knowledge. This finding supports Iser's (1990) view

that questions or comments from other than the reader may sabotage the reader's opportunities for personal experiences with the text. This finding also supports Apple (1990) and Giroux's (1981) views that the beliefs, values, and feelings students and teachers have about school and knowledge justify the teacher as authority over knowledge in the classroom.

Consistent with Fish's (1980) view about readers as members of interpretive communities who share socially negotiated interpretive strategies, these children were members of interpretive communities who shared perspectives from which they responded to literature. The perspectives from which they responded arose out of their interpretation of social interaction in the particular community of which they were a member. For example, when the children's views came from the perspective of an interpretive community in which the teacher was not imposing authority over the kind of response they made, then they seemed to assume more authority over their own knowledge when responding to stories they read. They made use of personal knowledge that arose out of their own experiences and was important in their own lives in their responses. Consistent with studies by Beach (1973) and Torbe (1974), when these children used their own knowledge their responses reflected meaning that seemed to be unique to their own thoughts. The way in which they reflected on their own knowledge in the context of these interpretive communities supports transactionalist views that meaning resides in the activity of the reading which involves the reader's prior experiences, background knowledge, and social circumstances of the reading in transaction with the text (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1985). This view explains how children having authority over the knowledge they use in

responses are able to create their own meaning by using their own knowledge in their negotiation of meaning with others (Fish, 1980), in filling in gaps in areas of indeterminacy in the text (Iser, 1978, 1990), and in creating the 'poem' (Rosenblatt, 1978).

In the interpretive communities where children had authority over the knowledge they used in their responses to literature, their responses also seemed consistent with their definitions of response. They talked about their thoughts and feelings in their responses. For example Marta expressed her desire to "jump into a book and be a character" in her response to The Green Gables Detectives, while Sheri talked about feeling emotional when a baby was being born in her response to A Swiftly Tilting Planet. Personal power for these children to direct their own reading (Cooper, 1985; Fish, 1980, Rosenblatt, 1978; and Thomson, 1987) seemed to come through them exploring the text on their own. When they directed their own responses to literature, their responses were longer than when teachers directed their responses, and they reflected their own knowledge and personal relations with the story.

Consistent with their definitions of response, these children also talked about parts of stories that were important to them. They made connections between themselves and story characters and events. Sheri developed strong relationships with characters and events in the book, A Swiftly Tilting Planet. Joseph, Marta, and Darwin expressed personal enjoyment, both individually and in group discussions, as they vicariously experienced fear, concern, and excitement in their relations with characters and events in mystery stories they were reading.

When the children responded to literature in peer group discussions, their responses reflected authority over the knowledge they used as they discussed personal and shared interests, problems, and backgrounds. These peer group discussions are representative of Habermas' (1979) ideal speech communities in which individuals have equal rights to talk, to question, and to discuss. Beach (1990) also supports the value of group discussions, stating that students have difficulty generating sudden insights about text, and "they gradually discover insights through articulation, reflection, and application of related experiences" (p. 66). The peer group discussions in this study appeared to foster this type of reflection and application through equality in communication (Beach, 1990; Habermas, 1979). For example, Cameron shared his interest in why he liked Stephen King books with peers, and Elaine shared her feelings with a peer about having certain characters as friends, when they discussed The Prince and the Goosegirl.

The children's use of vocabulary in peer groups such as "mean jerk" (Joseph), "hot shot" (Elaine), "posh" and "uppity" (Cameron), and Marta's comments about being "pretty and skinny" support Beach's (1990) view that children's contributions may be related to needs for social membership in groups. The children's awareness of, and analysis of the broader society, was also reflected in responses made during peer group discussions, seen for example in Darwin's comments about the Prince's use of power to control the goosegirl. This is consistent with Rosenblatt's (1978) view that if children experience text through reflection and analysis, a social sensitivity may be generalized to the broader context outside school. The children's discussions in peer groups about

some of the relations of power that underlie the broader society supports Giroux's (1981) belief that this kind of analysis and reflection makes this possible and Habermas' (1979) idea that individuals will speak more freely when an ideal speech community such as this exists. The children seemed to differentiate between their knowledge and school knowledge (Apple, 1990), and it appears that when children thought their responses were really not for a school purpose, then their responses were more consistent with their own definitions of response. For example, Sheri's comment that she got really scared when Charles just about died reflected her definition of response which included thoughts, feelings and her personal relations with story characters and events. These kinds of responses support the transactionalist view which is that meaning is created through the reader's transaction with the text, rather than meaning being solely in either the text or the reader (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1990, Rosenblatt, 1982).

Children's perceptions of who had authority over the knowledge to be used in their responses suggests many interpretive communities may exist for each child through each day in the context of one classroom. Major influences in children's social construction of interpretive communities seemed to arise from their interpretation of who had authority over knowledge, and the kind of knowledge that that authority directed.

# CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY, MAJOR CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

### Introduction and Summary

The present study sought to explore the nature of children's responses to literature in the form of books they chose on their own to read in the context of one classroom. Six grade five and six children in one classroom, identified as key informants, provided the primary source of information about the nature of their responses in the context of their classroom. This information was gathered through fieldnotes written during observations of the children's interactions with peers and teachers and their activities in class, interviews with the children and with their parents, samples of their oral and written responses, and samples of artifacts and projects. Perception checking strategies and triangulation were used to confirm observer interpretations, to ensure varied reflections of phenomena, and to alleviate participant-observer familiarity with the setting in which the study took place. In-the-field analysis involved observer comments based on insights, hunches, and questions generated during the re-reading of fieldnotes each day.

Post-site analysis, which involved the coding and interpretation of data, took place on two levels. The first level provided a description of the classroom context, a view of a typical day in the classroom, the lived experiences of each child in the context of the classroom, and views of parents about their children's reading. The second, a deeper level, involved identifying trends in the kinds of

responses children made in various interpretive communities in the context of the classroom. This led to the identification of categories of responses and recognition of the influences of authority on responses.

## Conclusions and Discussion

Jackson (1968), Mehan (1979), and others agree that the world in which individuals live at any given time is socially constructed by them through the interpretations they make about the social interactions that occur within it. Fish (1980), who sees readers as members of interpretive communities, contends they share socially negotiated interpretive strategies. Interpretive communities in this study refers to individuals who, through interpretation of social interaction within that community, share similar perspectives from which to respond to literature.

This study reveals that through interpretation of social interactions individual children may be members of more than one interpretive community within the world of the classroom. Beyond interpretive communities within the classroom, interviews with parents revealed that children are also members of unique interpretive communities that exist in their world outside the classroom, such as in the home context. Each interpretive community appears to be socially constructed by each child's interpretation of experiences and social interactions within it. Heshusius (1986), McLaren (1989), and Musgrave (1988) agree that the social construction of knowledge is influenced by interaction between individuals and support the view that readers interpret the situation in which they respond to their reading.

Rosenblatt (1978, 1982) and Iser (1978, 1990) both express concern that

when people outside the reader impose their own values about reading on the reader, the nature of the response or meaning making process of the reader is altered. However, neither elaborates on how this happens. This study identifies the reader's interpretation of the social interactions within an interpretive community as a major factor in explaining the nature of responses to literature.

The children in this study were members of various interpretive communities in the classroom and these interpretive communities seemed to be socially constructed by the children through their interpretations of explicit and implicit messages within the communities. For example, during teacher-directed lessons the children seemed to interpret explicit and implicit messages about teacher authority over the kind of knowledge to be used in their responses to literature. These findings are supported by Mehan (1979) who points out that for children to successfully participate in the culture of the classroom, they have to interpret rules that imply the direction they should take.

Children's interpretations of social interactions within a particular interpretive community within the classroom were influenced not only by messages they got from others in that community at that time, but also from their ideologies of Language Arts in school. For example, when asked why she felt she had to do work she had already done in Grade three, Marta said, "I guess its the curriculum. That's why we have to do that stuff. The teachers tell us that the things we do we have to 'cause its in the curriculum." This is consistent with Apple (1990) and Sharp's (1980) view that children's ideologies or beliefs, values, and feelings about school begin to develop before they begin school and are reinforced and regulated through social relations, practices, and

experiences that they encounter when they are in school.

Teacher's Authority

Mehan (1979) states that the things that happen in school seem natural in the context of the school, the teacher has more control than children over what happens in the classroom setting, and this gives legitimacy to the concept of teacher as authority. The children's views of teacher as authority influenced the responses they made in interpretive communities where they perceived the teacher as directing the activities. When teachers responded to the children's responses by asking questions, making comments, or making suggestions, the children's responses seemed to reflect their view that teachers were looking for particular kinds of responses. The kinds of responses the children made in this interpretive community seemed to be influenced by their attempts to provide the kinds of responses they perceived the teacher as requesting.

The children's awareness of the connections between power and knowledge were evident when they deferred to teacher authority when replying to questions teachers asked. The extent to which children's ideologies of the roles of teachers influenced their interpretations seemed to be evident in their responses when teachers attempted, by their questions, to have them express feelings and be more reflective in response. Their repeated comments to a teacher that they liked a book they were reading reflected their interpretation of what the teacher valued. The responses they made when they perceived the teacher as having authority over knowledge were not consistent with their definitions that response meant to express their own thoughts and feelings and to talk about parts of the

story that were important to them. This offers support to Rosenblatt's (1982) concern that too much teacher domination may place emphasis on teacher-approved interpretations of text and Iser's (1990) concern that when questions and comments come from outside the reader, the reader's opportunities to personally experience the reading is undermined.

Consistent with Fay's (1989) view that power involves the interaction of both powerful and powerless, children's ideologies about school and knowledge seemed to shape their social construction of interactions in the classroom and legitimize the teacher as having more power than themselves. The responses children wrote after a direct teaching lesson on how to respond to books authored by peers seemed to reflect their interpretation that in this context, teacher knowledge was more important than their own. When they interpreted teachers as having authority over knowledge to be used in responses, their responses did not reflect their definitions of response. They did not talk about how they felt or their relationships with characters or events in the story. They seemed to defer to making responses they thought teachers wanted, and they used teacher vocabulary and sentences that seemed alien to their own way of expressing ideas.

Children's Authority

It appeared that when children were in an interpretive community in which they had authority over their own knowledge, their responses were more consistent with their definitions of response than when they interpreted teachers as having authority over the knowledge to be used. Their responses seemed to

reflect their own personal relations with the story, the characters, and the events and related social issues in terms of their own interests. These responses supported views of Fish (1980), Iser (1990), and Rosenblatt (1982) who maintain that meaning during reading develops from the extent to which children can make use of their own knowledge and prior experiences as they read.

In interpretive communites in which children interpreted their own knowledge as valued, they talked about certain characters as though they were friends, and often made references in their responses to feeling as if they were living in the story. Their responses seemed to more closely represent their own voices and understandings when they had authority over what they knew.

When the children responded to stories in the interpretive community of peer group discussions, their responses seemed to suggest the absence of teacher authority over the knowledge they used and they openly shared interests, problems, and backgrounds, and discussed their own life experiences in relation to story characters and events. They seemed to move beyond understandings in their immediate social world to express their insights and values concerning differences between people, motives to achieve goals, and power relations between people in the broader society. These responses support Rosenblatt's (1978) view that reflection and analysis develops not only sensitivity to text, but also social sensitivity that can be generalized to the broader context outside the school.

The children's interpretation of their own authority in peer group discussions without a teacher present supports Habermas' (1979) notion of an "ideal speech community". In this kind of setting, the interaction between

individuals seemed to be equal in rights to talk, to question, and to discuss, and acceptance of comments gave the feeling that what they said was valid. Lastly, it seemed that when the children's interpretation of the social interaction in their interpretive community gave them permission to use their own knowledge in responses, their responses reflected their comfort in expressing emotions, likes and dislikes, and personal views about story characters, events, problems, and solutions.

This study has addressed the nature of responses to literature in the context of lived experiences of six children in one classroom. It has identified various interpretive communities that exist from the perspective of these children in the context of this classroom. These interpretive communities were socially constructed by the children through their prior experiences and background knowledge and through explicit and implicit messages in social interactions, activities, and routines in the classroom. Each of the interpretive communities provided a perspective from which each of the children responded to literature and from which the nature of their responses could be viewed.

## Implications for Theory

This study clarifies the notion of how various interpretive communities are socially constructed through children's interpretations of explicit and implicit social interactions within the particular context in which they are a member. These interpretive communities provide perspectives that are related to authority and knowledge from which children construct meaning and make responses to literature. Fish's (1980) notion of interpretive community has a key role to play

in extending response theory from a focus on within-child variables (cognitive and affective) to a recognition that a child's interpretation of who has authority over the knowledge in a specific interpretive community will have a major influence on shaping response to literature. In other words, response is not only a result of transaction between the reader and the text, but between reader as a member of a specific interpretive community and the text, and the response will vary as the specific interpretive community varies.

Through tying together the child's response to literature and the social context of the child's world, this study has implications for theories about reader response. Fish's (1980) concept that shared interpretive strategies determined before reading are socially negotiated during the reading to shape the response is extended in this study to recognize the notion that responses are shaped by readers' interpretations of authority over knowledge in the interpretive community. Findings in this study show that the contexts of interpretive communities are socially constructed by children through their interpretations of explicit and implicit messages in the social interactions within it. The shared basis from which children responded to literature in these interpretive communities was found to be shaped by their perspectives of who had authority over the knowledge to be used in their responses to literature. These findings also have implications for Rosenblatt's (1978) theory in which she states that the 'poem' is created when the reader enters into an aesthetic transaction, and factual information is gleaned when the reader reads from an efferent stance within a context. While stance could account to some extent for the nature of responses children made to literature in this study, this construct was insufficient

to account for differences in responses across different interpretive communities. Particularly important were children's interpretations of whether they or teachers had authority over the kind of knowledge to be used in their responses to literature.

Iser (1978, 1990) has emphasized a connection between the extent of readers' participation in their use of prior experiences and background knowledge in filling in areas of indeterminacy during reading and the readers' ability to make meaning that has real personal significance. This study extends this idea by offering the notion that the reader's participation not only involves experiences and prior knowledge. The extent to which children draw on prior experiences and background knowledge may also be influenced by the interpretative community in which the reading occurs.

This study confirms Apple's (1990) idea that children make varied sense of their lived worlds in the classroom through their participation in the social setting of the classroom. Consistent with critical social theory, which focuses on emancipation of the individual (Gibson, 1986), the results of this study support Apple (1990), Giroux (1988), Jackson (1968), and Sharp's (1980) notion that schools shape children's meaning making in both explicit and implicit ways. The nature of the responses the children made in different interpretive communities in this study suggests that these children may already have an implicit understanding of their roles in different contexts. The ways in which children exerted their own power by talking about things that were personally interesting to them as they worked on assigned tasks is consistent with McLaren's (1989) view that resistance is a way of "gaining power" and "celebrating pleasure" (p.

188) and shows these children may have more insight into their own identities than we have so far assumed.

Lastly, this study has shown that the nature of response is tied to deeper social issues about power relations and knowledge than previously recognized. This study has moved one step closer to understanding relations of power that underlie the culture of the classroom and influence children's interpretation of literature within the various interpretive communities of that culture.

## Implications for Practice

In considering implications of this study for practice, it must first be noted that this research has generated hypotheses which are grounded in the context of the one classroom in which the data was collected. Hence, the suggestions offered below are more in the line of possibilities rather than prescriptions.

The present study has shown how the nature of children's responses may be shaped by their interpretations of social interactions in the interpretive community in which the response takes place. This finding suggests that identification of varied interpretive communities in the classroom may provide the teacher with understandings of different perspectives from which children respond to stories they read. Such understanding could assist teachers to consciously provide for a range of interpretive communities in the classroom as Miall (1990) suggests, including some in which the teacher has authority and others in which children have authority (Miall, 1990). Experiences along this range may enhance both teachers' and childrens' understandings about the nature of varied response to literature. The results of this study might also

sensitize teachers and teacher-librarians to the need to critically examine reading activities and methods of teaching on the basis of how children may interpret them and how they may shape the nature of children's responses to literature.

When the perspective from which children responded gave legitimacy to their own knowledge in this study, they used personal knowledge and reflected on their own experiences in their responses. This study suggests ways children can be helped to view their knowledge as legitimate and valued. For example, when unique responses are encouraged, children may be more likely to give legitimacy to the knowledge they use in their response. Also, through talking about their own ideas and their responses, children may gain confidence in themselves as thinkers, have confidence that their knowledge is legitimate, and respond to literature in a voice that reflects their own knowledge and experiential backgrounds.

When children have opportunities to talk about and discuss stories they are reading in peer groups, they may develop understandings of how they produce meaning, and this would help in legitimating their own knowledge. Beach (1990) and Purves (1972) offer confirmation that these opportunities to explore and compare responses through peer discussion are valued ways to develop deeper understandings of both the literature and the self. These notions also provide possibilities for ways in which parents or other adult volunteers in the classroom may interact with students to discuss literature. They also suggest strategies that parents may use when discussing literature with their children in the home context.

Having equal rights of speech (Habermas, 1979) in discussions gives

children opportunities to shape their own meaning-making talk about literature. Eeds and Wells (1989) point out that if teachers can become simply readers with whom children can talk, then grand conversations about literature may be possible between teachers and children.

From the results of this study, it appears that it would be useful to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on the relationship between authority and knowledge in the classroom and the influences of these variables on children's learning. The kinds of questions they could be encouraged to engage in could be related to their views about time pressures, where these pressures come from, and how these pressures may influence the nature of teaching and learning in the classroom. Questions about mixed messages between teachers and children and the effects of these messages on children's production of meaning in the classroom may encourage teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices. Questions directed toward understanding how particular curriculum materials and methods of teaching produce children's meaning may also encourage teachers to critically analyse the form and content of these materials, and how they may be used in teaching. Opportunities provided for teachers to observe or video-record one another as they teach or interact with children may also provide the basis for discussions about practices in teaching. Discussions among teachers that reflect on children's possible interpretations of social interaction in different interpretive communities in the context of the classroom may help to facilitate the need to foster an environment which gives legitimacy to children's authority over the use of their own knowledge when responding to literature. Discussions about children's possible interpretations of social interactions in

different interpretive communities in the context of the classroom between teachers of classrooms children move from and those they move to may help them to foster an environment in the classroom that eases children's transitions from school to school or from grade to grade. The present study may also have implications for teacher inservice and teacher education by providing ideas from which practicing teachers or student teachers may explore the complex social environment of schools. This may lead to them reflecting on their own views about teaching, learning, and children's responses to literature.

## Implications for Further Research

The findings of this exploratory study provide a base for moving beyond a classification of responses to looking at influences of the classroom context on the reader's response. Investigations which follow this study may involve other possible relations between children's interpretation of social interactions, their memberships in interpretive communities, and their responses in those communities. Some suggestions for further study are presented below.

Since this study was exploratory in nature, a replication of it could be done in a similar environment with children of ages similar to, or different from, those in this study over similar or extended periods of time. The methodology used in this study could be repeated, and this replication could validate the findings that children's responses to literature are shaped by their interpretation of social interactions in varied interpretive communities that exist in the context of the classroom.

The present study focused on children from middle class backgrounds.

Therefore, multi-site studies, similar in design to this one, could be conducted in classrooms of schools located in different socio-economic areas. Comparisons of children's interpretations of teacher authority and their own authority about the kind of knowledge they use in making responses may provide insight into the relationship between authority over personal knowledge and social class. A similar study done with children of different cultural backgrounds could provide understandings about the relationship between authority over personal knowledge and cultural background.

Since this study focused on children who were good readers and enjoyed reading, a similar study could be conducted involving children who are recognized by their teachers as poor readers. Questions may be addressed concerning the relationships of levels of reading with children's interpretation of social interaction in the interpretive community in which they read. The extent to which poor readers assume authority over their own knowledge when opportunities to do so arise might also be investigated.

Inasmuch as this study focused on children, a study which focuses on individual teacher awareness of differences in the kinds of responses children make to literature and their interpretations of these differences may provide insight into teacher's awareness of influences on children's response to literature. A study which examines the match between children's and teacher's perceptions of the interpretive community in which responses occur may furnish valuable information that would assist teachers in effective literature program planning. This study also provides a base for conducting research that would explore the relationship between teacher's beliefs and values about their roles as teachers

and the extent to which they provide opportunities for children in their classrooms to have authority over their own knowledge when they respond to literature.

Critical social theory highlights concepts that were useful in this study to explain how children's interpretations of social interactions influenced their response to literature in various interpretive communities. Further research is needed to clarify the relation between concepts in critical theory and reader response.

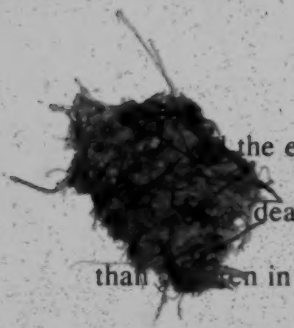
## Final Comments

> "Today I was researching a topic on Pablo Picasso when I came across a book that brang joy to my research." (Cameron, Journal, May 18, 1991)

Cameron's comment expresses his feelings about how literature could make his research enjoyable. His comment aptly describes my sentiments toward the six children in this study. They provided not only joy but valuable data from which to explore the nature of their responses to literature.

As a result of my experience as a researcher in this study, I have gained tremendous respect for children's potential to construct their own reality within the various interpretive communities in their lives. The initial intention of this study, to explore the nature of children's responses to literature in the context of the classroom, was surpassed by going beyond definitions of children's responses to recognizing contextual influences on the kinds of responses they made.

While becoming aware of the varied interpretive communities that are constructed by children's interpretations of social interactions, I have also



the extent to which these interpretations are shaped by their values, deas. The legitimation they give to teachers having more authority than n in some interpretive communities within the classroom setting directs their responses in a way that overlooks their own knowledge and experiences. When children give legitimacy to their own knowledge and experiences in other interpretive communities within the same classroom, they make connections between themselves and their reading experiences, and their own voice is heard in their responses to literature.

Since children respond according to their own construction of reality, it is important to understand what that construction is. Being attentive to this construction addresses the child's view of the world and is foundational to facilitating learning experiences for children.

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